

FOREWORD At the beginning I would like to mention five things. These are the idea, the sources, the claim and the outline of the book, and the placement of its contents in contemporary events. First, the book idea. A few years ago I was preoccupied with the question of what devil might have driven my father's generation when they prepared and started a new war after the catastrophe of the First World War. At first, I thought only of the German fathers. The results of the Nuremberg Trials initially led me to believe that. In my search for clues, however, I came across many things that I had not known before. Above all, this was the context of world events at that time. The usual German historiography, from the usual school history books to the standard works of the Military History Research Office, for whatever reason almost completely ignores this context. History is viewed there with a "tunnel vision." "Thus" I read for the first time in foreign literature during the search for traces, in which environment it came to the Second World War. The prehistory of this war resembles a detective story; to my surprise one with a whole group of perpetrators. So my book idea shifted. Instead of being on the trail of the one perpetrator, I ended up following many leads and more perpetrators than I initially believed. My second preliminary comment is about the literature and sources. I have used almost nothing in this book that has not already been described somewhere. All sources are available to everyone in public libraries and archives or via the Internet, and yet much is not known. Depending on the selection of literature and sources, however, quite different pictures of history emerge. The most widespread historiography in Germany concentrates on the German past and selects the sources accordingly. But this concentration narrows the view to the already mentioned tunnel perspective, and it runs the risk to fade out the international customs and currents of the described epochs. It destroys the contexts in which the Germans' past took place. This is especially true of the prehistory of World War II. You can't make a report about a car race by only describing the Ferrari cars. The whole thing only becomes a race when all the cars are on the track. Nevertheless, foreign literature is not a source of absolute truth. English, French, Americans and Soviets, like other nations, tend to self-promote and justify their own actions. Nevertheless, they have been good trackers for me in my work. The problem I faced in 11 the tracking process was that most sources convey intent. There are the contemporary witnesses, whose accounts before 1939 report differently than their memoirs after 1945. There are the official volumes of documents that conceal "hot stuff," for example, the "Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik" (ADAP), which I initially believed to be authentic because they were published in the 1950s as the official documentation of the Foreign Office in Bonn. Only later did it occur to me that this postwar edition of the German Foreign Office files had been edited by American, English, and French scholars and archivists. It should not come as a surprise that the files were selected and also "washed" in favor of the victors. For example, the first official threat to go to war over Danzig is missing from this reprint. It was issued by the Polish ambassador in Berlin in March 1939, even before Hitler ordered the Wehrmacht leadership to prepare for war against Poland. However, there is the publication of the same documents from 1939 (AA 1939), which still contains this threat¹. But even this pre-war collection of documents is not without its hooks. It, just like the "British War Bluebook" and the comparable documentations of other nations, leaves many letters and protocols unmentioned when they incriminate the respective governments. Thus, I found omissions, revisions, falsifications, and pro-domo interpretations in the memoirs and documents. What was confusing to me about the German literature was that the first postwar historiography was compiled under legal constraints that imposed limits on research. In the Überleitungsvertrag of 1954, Article 7 (1), it was bindingly stipulated that "German courts and authorities ... all judgments and decisions" from the Nuremberg Trials "shall be treated in all respects as final and legally binding ... to be treated as final and legally effective." Among the court's decisions were the "findings" on the course of events leading up to the war. They are in the reasons for the judgments. According to the court, the verdicts could be reached without taking evidence or against

the evidence of the defense.² This opened the door to the subjective view of the victorious powers and obliged the defeated Germans by court order to adopt this view. Among the authorities who have to treat these "findings" thus arrived at as legally valid in every respect are the Ministries of Culture of the Länder, which supervise the contents of the history books in the schools. The researching officials are bound by oath of service to this Article 7 of the Treaty of Germany and thus to a reading of "history", which was made binding at Nuremberg. 1 In AA 1939, No. 2, Document 208 with Polish threat of war and in ADAP, Series D, Volume VI Document 101 (of 1956) without this threat. 2 Articles 19 and 20 of the Statutes of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal. See ITM, Volume I, pages 7-9 12 Now, one might say that the Transition Treaty and 1954 itself are already history. But in 1990, the binding force of the judgments of the Nuremberg Trial was extended one more time by treaty. In 1990, the Transitional Treaty was replaced by the Two-plus-Four Treaty, and the victorious powers insisted that the aforementioned Article 7 (1) of the 1954 Treaty remain in force. In the "Agreement of September 27/28, 1990 on the Treaty on Germany and the Transitional Treaty," which accompanies the Two-plus-Four Treaty, this was once again assured in writing by the German side.³ Thus, as a reader today, one does not know where historians and authors from the early Federal Republic of Germany have put down on paper the victorious reading of history in a law-abiding manner and left it to subsequent historians and authors as a misleading legacy. In view of such a multifaceted literature and source material, it should not surprise the reader of this book that the picture of the period between the two great wars that has come to my attention differs in part from what is otherwise common knowledge in Germany. Now to the third preliminary remark. I do not claim to have read and processed the thousands of books that have already been written on the subject of my book and to know the latest scientific publications on the subject. My concern is to put the history leading up to the Second World War into comprehensible contexts and to tell it in a way that is easy to read. I hope that this will help especially younger readers in their search for their own judgment on history. As a fourth preliminary remark, I would like to say something about the structure of the book. In an effort to show connections, I have presented many things not according to their chronological order but according to their cross-references, e.g., successively the dealings of the Poles with the Russians, with the British, with the Germans, and so on. Since many of the various cross-references and connections took place in the same time periods and touch on the same historical events, numerous repetitions in the text cannot be avoided. This may bother some readers, but to others it may be a welcome aid to memory given the large number of events described. The last preliminary remark is concerned with placing the topic in the context of contemporary events. Our German historical consciousness, as far as the period of National Socialist rule is concerned, is marked by the horrible side of the regime of that time. We can hardly report on this period without thinking of the downfall of the rule of law in the country and without thinking of the cruel murder of Jews and other minorities. The memory of the crimes committed on behalf of our own government at the time cast a gloomy shadow over the era under consideration, 3 Two-plus-Four Treaty, Prof. Stern, pages 227f and BM Justiz of 22 Jan. 1997. 13 National Socialism as the guiding idea of the regime of the time and the demise of parliamentarism after 1933 certainly created conditions that made it easier for Hitler to open a war against Poland in 1939. But neither of them caused the Second World War. Similar things can be said of the crimes committed by the German Reich government against the Jews in Germany. They may have strengthened America's commitment against Nazi Germany, but they did not cause World War II. Thus, the Unjust State and the murder of minorities were not the cause and occasion of the war. Therefore, they are not the object of study of the book and not its subject. I will rather try to describe what led to the second quarrel of nations within 25 years in 1939. With contending parties, it is obvious to consider them all together. Much of our German history between 1919 and 1939 cannot be understood without knowledge of what happened in other

countries at the same time.

effects and interactions are often too closely intertwined. But it is not only the contemporaneous history of our neighboring peoples that influenced the beginning of the war; it is also, and not insignificantly, the common prehistory of the contending parties. The Israeli ambassador in Bonn, Asher ben Nathan, once replied in an interview on the television program DIE WOCHE IN BONN to the question of who started the 6-Day War in 1967 and fired the first shots: "That is completely irrelevant. What matters is what preceded the first shots." Thus, almost every story

has its antecedents. The beginning of the war in 1939 cannot be understood without the person of the dictator Hitler. Hitler and the willingness of the Germans to follow him into war are incomprehensible without the Treaty of Versailles. The general indignation of the German people about Versailles cannot be understood without the prehistory of the First World War. And even this prehistory can only be understood if one knows the competitive behavior of the great states in 19th century Europe. The book will therefore have to take a long run-up. 14

THE PREHISTORY The Second World War cannot be understood from its outcome, but only from its prehistory. This is commonly traced back to the Treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain and Trianon. But that the treaties could become the parents of a second world war can only be understood by those who again know their prehistory. These three treaties, which follow the First World War, were imposed on the defeated states, and they are unusually harsh. In the treaties, the victors charge the defeated Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians with sole guilt for the First World War. The sole guilt is then the "legitimation" with which the victorious powers in 1919 take parts of the territories, populations and national assets of the defeated, and with which they impose on them reparations in unreal amounts. The Federal Republic of Germany, for example, is still paying the remnants of these reparations for World War I until the year 2010⁴ as stipulated in the treaty. Among the German and Austrian population, the accusation of sole guilt in 1919 leads to indignation, because people in both countries still remember too well the political events of the last pre-war years and the role of the victorious states shortly before the beginning of the war. This knowledge cannot be erased by the forced signatures to the treaties. In addition, profound knowledge of history was part of the common property of the educated bourgeoisie at the time, and the elites in Germany, Austria and Hungary therefore saw and evaluated the events of 1914 and before in larger historical contexts. Anyone who wants to understand the reactions to Versailles and Saint-Germain in Germany and in Austria, and anyone who tries to understand the history of the peoples of Europe before 1939, must recall the events and contexts from before 1914. The Germans' knowledge of 1939 is the key to their motives in 1939. The road to reconciliation between the quarreling peoples after World War I was blocked by the refusal of the victors to admit their own complicity in the past war. Thus the three treaties cemented enmity in Europe rather than building bridges for the future. The victors of 1918 thus provide Adolf Hitler with his first major popular theme: "breaking the fetters of Versailles." 4 BM Finance November 27, 1996 17

Reasons for War in Europe The view of history of the generation concerned in Austria and in Germany goes far back into the past. According to their knowledge, the First World War is not an isolated or special case in history. Repeatedly in the past, rising peoples and states have earned and fought for their place alongside dominant peoples and states by claiming and winning for themselves a share of the mineral resources, trade flows and other sources of wealth available on this earth, and by daring to be competitors. For the generation of Europeans around 1900, the rise and fall of nations is part of world history and not a question of morality. Thus, the Germans at that time could also see nothing reprehensible in the rise of their own country. For them, the phenomenon of rise and fall in modern times is something like a natural law of history. In England, by the way, the view of things is the same⁵.

Portugal's world and colonial empire, for example, was united with Spain in 1580 in personal union, thus replacing Portugal as the first power in Europe. As early as 1577, England begins to attack Spain's trade routes. In 1588, Spain loses its just-won supremacy in the naval war against England through the sinking of its fleet. Now England rises and takes over as Great Britain for three and a half centuries the supremacy on the globe. It is only once seriously challenged by France under Emperor Napoleon. Great Britain consistently watches over the fact that no power on the near continent and in the environment of the own colonies strengthens so far that it could become the rival. The means to this end is to always intervene in favor of the weaker states in the event of third-party disputes on the mainland and to wage war against the "upstart". This policy of the "balance of power" secures the existence of the British Empire until the beginning of the Second World War. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Great Britain also waged a series of other wars to take colonies from other states, to protect its own colonies from the independence aspirations of the people living there, or to thwart the increase in power and territory of its competitors. With this view of things, the ordinary German citizen before World War I considers Britain's supremacy to be a reality of indefinite duration. But he does not see in it any right of the British to determine the course and destiny of the other peoples of Europe.

5 Messerschmidt, page 84

6 Balance of Power

18 The British-German Rivalry

One of the causes of the outbreak of the two world wars of 1914 and 1939 lies in Germany's economic rise after 1871. But that alone would not necessarily have led to World War I, which led to World War II. In addition, Germany's politicians made two fatal mistakes before 1914. They fail to extend the German-Russian reinsurance treaty, and they give Germany's economic rise a maritime component. Both put Great Britain on the map. German unification in 1871 creates an economic area of considerable dynamism. Favored by a well-developed educational system and provided with the most important mineral resources of the time, coal and iron ore, Germany's productivity and foreign trade rise in a short time to a degree that is frightening for England. From 1880 to 1907, for example, Germany quadruples its demand for hard coal, almost catching up with England. In the same period, Germany's smelters move up to first place in Europe for pig iron production. By 1907, Germany was already producing twice as much steel as England. Germany's foreign trade developed accordingly. Although London attempted to curb German exports in 1887 with the "Merchandise marks act", with the consumer warning "Made in Germany", German foreign trade grew by 250 percent from 1887 to 1907, while England's increased by only 80 percent in the same 20 years. France, too, is economically outstripped by Germany during this period. Thus, England's "balance of power" on the continent is threatened. To this view of things is added the assumption that Germany is striving to dominate the whole of Europe. On January 1, 1907, an official of the British Foreign Office, Sir Eyre Crowe, wrote a memorandum in which he placed Germany's economic rise in a historical context. He writes that England had first put Spain, then the Netherlands and finally France in their place. Now, at the beginning of the 20th century, these three powers are no longer serious rivals. Now and in the future, England's only potent opponent would be Germany. The Germans were striving with consistency and energy for supremacy in Europe. All attempts by Berlin to reach an understanding, this memorandum concludes, were mere deceptive maneuvers designed to distract England from the fact that Germany wanted to dominate the continent. Crowe gained influence and a career with this view. In 1920, he becomes undersecretary of state in the Foreign Office.

7. Germany's economic rise and its competition were obviously seen as a threat in England before the First World War. When then also 7 British Foreign Office

19 still the great Russia loses a war against Japan in East Asia in 1904, the last power that could be dangerous to Germany on the continent is tarnished. In the eyes of the British, the "balance of power" in Europe is thus cancelled in favor of Germany. Thus, since 1904, British governments have endeavored to isolate the German Reich in the field of foreign policy. And German ineptitude gives room for this. England's treaty policy England

begins to turn toward France, until then its greatest adversary in the 8 colonies. The two countries conclude an "Entente cordiale" in 1904, initially coordinating only their colonial interests. In 1906, the war and foreign ministers of the two countries agreed on army and fleet meetings to coordinate military actions of both countries for the future. In 1911, concrete action is taken. The British Chief of Staff traveled to Paris and promised the French support in the form of six army divisions in the event of war with Germany.⁹ Thus England committed itself against Germany without the slightest threat of war coming from the latter. And France can count on England's help from 1911 on, and in case of tension with Germany can play poker accordingly. The first of the two fatal German mistakes mentioned above is the failure to secure itself by treaty, as in the past, against Russia. This allows England to supplement the entente with France in the west of Germany with a confederation with Russia in the east of Germany, thus putting the German Reich in a bind from two sides. In 1890, the German-Russian agreements of 1873, 1884 and 1887 had expired. The German government refrained from renewing the reinsurance treaties with Russia in deference to its ally Austria. In July 1905, at a meeting on the coast of Finland, Kaiser Wilhelm II and his Russian "cousin," Czar Nikolai II, concluded another Russian treaty. In July 1905, Kaiser Wilhelm II and his Russian "cousin," Tsar Nikolai II, met on the coast of Finland and concluded another Russian-German mutual assistance pact, but the heads of government in Berlin and Petersburg refused to sign the pact.¹⁰ They feared that their countries might be drawn into each other's wars by the new mutual assistance obligations. Thus, in 1905, Germany finds itself without a safeguard against its large neighbor, Russia. The British government seizes this opportunity to approach Russia instead of the Germans themselves. Starting in 1906, negotiations are held in Petersburg on the colonial ambitions of both sides. In August 1907, both states conclude the Russo-English Treaty, in which they mark their "zones of influence" in Afghanistan and Persia.⁸ A cordial alliance⁹ Grenfell, pages 12ff¹⁰ Wilhelm II and the Tsar's wife are cousins²⁰. But England was not content with political détente on colonial issues. As early as November 1907, General French, the commander-in-chief of the English army, travels to St. Petersburg to discuss far more than Afghanistan and Persia with Russian generals and ministers. He urges the Russians to reinforce their troops on the western border with Germany. Thus, Britain pulls the strings against Germany as well, which has no other, especially territorial, goals at the time except economic expansion. The Fleet Race The second fatal mistake Germany makes in the face of Britain's claim to power is to add a maritime component to its own expansion, that is, to reinforce the German fleet. As population and productivity rise, fishing and merchant shipping increase along with foreign trade. From 1884, the Reich also acquired its first colonies. Self-confidence grew in the economy, the population and politics, and Germany believed that it could place itself on an equal footing with the established countries of France and England. The general enthusiasm and belief in the sense and benefits of world trade and world politics were as widespread in the German Reich at that time as the positive opinion on the globalization of politics and the economy is today. Especially the still young and in this respect careless Kaiser Wilhelm II elevates Germany's equal standing in the world to his political program. The emperor, son of an English princess and favorite grandson of Queen Victoria in London, is strongly impressed by everything he experiences as the English way of life and politics. His fascination with world trade, fleet building and colonies stems from this heritage. Beginning in 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered the construction of a fleet that, in addition to the coastal defenses previously pursued, was to protect trade and overseas connections from interruption in the event of international crises or in the event of defense. Germany thus enters a field in which other nations have long been at home, so that the expansion of its own navy is not unusual at first. In 1898, the German Reichstag enacted its first naval construction law. England had already initiated new fleet building programs in 1889 and 1894, Russia in 1890 and 1895, Japan in 1896 and the U.S. in 1897.¹¹ Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German Reichstag and the naval leadership under Admiral von

Tirpitz thus by no means commit anything that could be called new, warmongering or immoral with the expansion of the hitherto small German navy in 1898. In 1898, the German fleet consisted of only 9 battleships and first-class cruisers in terms of large "caliber" ships. The British, by comparison, consists of 7212. 11 MGFA, Marine, page 222 12 MGFA, Marine, page 181 21 In 1900, the German Reichstag approves its second Fleet Building Act, which provides for the expansion of the German navy to a strength of about two-thirds that of the British by 1920. This puts Great Britain on the map. German naval construction from 1898 onward initially pursued the general goal of ensuring that Germany could keep pace with modern nations in the race for markets and influence in the world and not fall behind. In particular, however, especially from 1900 onward, the Imperial Government, the Kaiser and the naval leadership are trying to build up a new position vis-à-vis England. First, Germany wants to protect its fishing fleet from the rude attacks of the English fishermen. Secondly, it wants to free its imports and exports by sea and thus a large part of its economic arteries from England's "mercy". Thirdly, Germany wants to secure itself militarily against England's fleet, especially against its naval blockading capabilities. And fourth, German policy hopes to become an interesting alliance partner for Britain with an adequate fleet. The first concern relates to the piratical methods used by England's fishermen at the time, often and that even in German territorial waters, to harass German fishermen on the open sea and drive them through their nets. The second concern is aimed at England's naval power to condone, impede or prevent trade worldwide. The third is a reaction to England's tradition of naval blockades, which it has used in the past to cut off both enemy and neutral countries from their raw material and food imports in cases of conflict. The new German fleet is now to become so strong that in the future it will be able to break the so-called "tight blockade" of German ports in the North Sea. The fourth concern is of a strategic political nature. The Imperial Government, the Kaiser, and the naval leadership believe that, in the event of confrontation with other naval powers, England might need Germany, with a respectable fleet, as an ally, and that a partnership of equals with Great Britain could thus be achieved. In the event of tensions between Britain and Germany, it is also reckoned that Britain would prefer to keep peace with a sufficiently strong naval power, Germany, and negotiate if necessary, rather than risk its own fleet in a naval war against Germany. The four intentions behind Germany's naval buildup before World War I are thus defensive. They do not aim to start wars themselves, nor do they seek colonial or other land gains. The earth is also divided in the meantime. However, the emperor, the imperial government and the naval leadership are achieving the opposite of rapprochement with England, of securing trade routes and of security for Germany with fleet building. The thorn in England's flesh is rapid German economic growth and German trade competition on the mainland and overseas. Neither of these can be combated by war without taking on the stigma of blame for such a 22 war, unless the war blame is placed on Germany. Thus, in England's public opinion, German fleet building is built up into a reason for war and Germany is accused of striving for world domination. In this context, it is interesting to compare the naval construction in both countries and not to ignore the navies of Russia and the USA. The fleet building programs of Great Britain and the German Empire were based on different philosophies. Admiral von Tirpitz and the naval leadership develop the idea that a German navy in strength of about 60% of England's is the royal road to solving the four goals they have set: protection of North Sea fisheries, their own trade on the seas, protection against naval blockades, and alliance capability with England. With such a 60% fleet, Tirpitz is convinced that England's security and naval supremacy cannot in reality be threatened. But it can be used, von Tirpitz believes, to break England's naval blockades if necessary and, in a war, to attack and sink parts of the British fleet in the North Sea, so that in such a case, rather than risk losing expensive ships, Britain would want to come to an understanding with the German Empire rather than fight wars. The idea of risk gives the new Tirpitz fleet its name, the "Risk Fleet." Moreover, Admiral von Tirpitz and the Kaiser calculated, in the event

of a war with its two colonial rivals France and Russia, which maintain the next strongest navies after England, Great Britain might have an interest in an alliance with fleet-strong Germany. But this calculation does not add up. England is convinced that its own navy must always outnumber the sum of the two next largest fleets by about 10 % in number and strength, so that it can stand alone victoriously against two allied opposing naval powers if necessary. This is the same thinking from which the Soviet Union five decades later excessively retains large numbers of land forces. In England, it is believed that only in this way will British supremacy on the seas and the value added from the colonies be secure in the long run. In 1899, therefore, the "Naval Defence Act" on the "two power standard" ¹³ was enacted in London, and the advantage of the British fleet over the two next largest was made law. In 1899, these were still the French and Russian navies. But starting in 1900, the year of the second German fleet construction law, two new competitors enter the market at once. From around 1903, it became clear to the Admiralty in London that the fleets of the United States and Germany, which had hitherto only been second-rate, were becoming the new counting factors in the two-power standard. In 1903, the German navy overtakes the French and the Russian navy and thus takes third place in the world rankings after the USA, which had already risen before. From now on, for every additional ship in North America and Germany, England must build a new one of its own. The numbers of large battleships in the U.S. and Germany grow almost constantly in equal amounts from 1901 until the start of World War I, from 17 each to about 45 in both countries ¹⁴. Britain accordingly upgrades from 43 in 1901 to 85 in 1914 to meet the two-power standard. Although England tries to escape its rivals' race to catch up by a leap in quality, it does not succeed in doing so either. Starting in 1904, England's shipyards laid the keel for a new type of capital ship,

the so-called Dreadnought class, with higher speed, stronger armor and more powerful on-board artillery than on previous ships. But the Royal Navy's "dreadnought leap" does not bring the advance as expected. The U.S. followed suit in the same year; Germany, France, Japan and Italy one to three years later. For Britain, this fleet upgrade becomes expensive, and London must find a way out politically. The search for the way follows many tracks. The first trail that Britain follows leads directly to Germany. Several times between 1898 and 1901, the British government tries to negotiate Germany out of building warships. In return, Germany demands a British-German alliance, which England is not prepared to enter into. On the German side, this fosters the conviction that one must have more ships to be ripe and interesting for such an alliance. In 1907, at a disarmament conference in The Hague, the British make another futile effort to put treaty shackles on German warship construction. In 1908 and 1912, the British King Edward VII and two cabinet members visit the German emperor and the naval leadership to convince them that battleship construction in Germany must be stopped or at least curbed ¹⁵. Since England is already in the enemy camp by treaty at the time and is also unwilling to enter into a German-English neutrality treaty at Germany's request, there is ostensibly no reason for the German Imperial Government and the Kaiser to abandon the 60% fleet and cease shipbuilding. The end of this first track leads straight to the second. England seeks a balance of interests with the previous naval powers number two and three, with France and with Russia. As already described, there is a reconciliation of their colonial interests with both countries and in 1904 the Entente with the French and in 1907 the Anglo-Russian Treaty. Thus, from 1907 on, Germany is encircled by a "triple entente" of France, Great Britain and Russia ¹⁴ MGFA, Marine, page 224 ¹⁵ MGFA, Marine; pages 263 ff ²⁴ which in 1914, after the Sarajevo murder, cleverly passes ball after ball to each other. Thus the warning shot of Germany's naval policy backfired. German historiography after World War II sees the German naval arms buildup as a large part of the fault of the Kaiser and Admiral von Tirpitz for the outbreak of the First World War. Germany, they argue, challenged Great Britain to start the war by building a fleet. Here, German scientists follow the arguments of the victors of 1918. The real challenges of the pre-war

years, however, are called German science and technology, economic growth and competition on all markets. German fleet building, on the other hand, is not a serious competition for England, even if it causes difficulties for the British. The construction of the Tirpitz fleet with the four goals: Protection of German fisheries and trade, breaking of blockades and alliance with Britain, has nevertheless been legitimate, but unwise in the face of England as an adversary. Fleet building in Germany's shipyards has symbolic power for the elites in Britain's business, political and military communities. It shows unmistakably what the elites have long since understood - that Germany now demands free competition and equal rights on the globe. In addition to a fleet, a true naval power also requires strategic geographic positions from which the fleet can operate. Great Britain itself owns a piece of Atlantic coast and otherwise has foreign bases all over the world between Sydney and Gibraltar. It can drive and supply a navy from there. It can protect its merchant fleet from there and block other countries' trade routes. This second factor, which makes a naval power out of a fleet, is completely missing in Germany. The German Empire is strategically stuck in the North Sea. Access to and from the German naval ports of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven can be cut off at any time by a "narrow blockade" in the North Sea, a "wide blockade" at the North Sea outlets, or a "strategic blockade" on the Atlantic. If Germany had wanted to be dangerous to Britain on the seas, she would have had to build an Atlantic fleet the size of the Royal Navy and have ports on the Atlantic coast. Neither Kaiser Wilhelm II, nor the Reich government, nor von Tirpitz ever sought to do this. The "Risk Fleet" was designed for naval battle in the North Sea, not for a war over England's colonial empire. Therein lies von Tirpitz's mistake, for his fleet can never really harm Britain in the First World War. England's naval strategists know all this, and yet the British government and king insist before World War I that Germany threatens Britain. The threat theory has a second weak side, and this becomes apparent in the overall view of all fleets. Even before Germany begins its first fleet building program, Britain, Russia, France, Japan and the United States begin to upgrade their fleets. Thus, Germany's fleet expansion takes place within the framework of an international arms race. The increase in German ships is thus continuously relativized by the parallel development of the other navies. Germany's fleet must therefore always be seen in the context of the fleets of those states that have allied themselves against the German Reich by treaty. In 1914, Germany's 45 battleships faced 150 ships in the fleets of Russia, England and France. Since 1907, Russia has also been expanding its Baltic fleet and tying up parts of the German navy, which are thus no longer available against England. And France has taken over securing the Mediterranean for England since 1912, thus freeing up the British Mediterranean fleet for deployment in the North Sea. From this point of view, too, the Tirpitz Plan is a failure. At no point before World War I does the German navy gain a strength that England should have seriously feared. But from England's perspective, things look different. Out of a mixture of a sense of mission and a sense of business, the elite and the people of England feel responsible for a world empire that they have acquired through arduous struggle and held together with success for over three centuries. For the British, the "right" to be number one and to defend it if necessary is a natural right beyond all doubt. This basic understanding includes not tolerating any competition, neither on the seas nor on the continent of Europe. And competition can only be curbed as long as it is still inferior. Over the centuries, this has led to the development of the "balance of power" strategy. It ensures that no state in Europe can develop more power than another power that keeps it in check. The German Empire violates this British "rule of the game" from 1902, when the navy of the Kaiser becomes larger than that of the Tsar of Russia. Furthermore, German naval construction forces the British to come to terms with France and Russia, thus giving up freedom of action. It forces them to give up the protection of the sea and trade routes through the Mediterranean to France. And last but not least, the German navy threatens England's North Sea coast. That the Royal Navy¹⁶ does the same with the German North Sea coast is not morally balanced against it. That the

Tirpitz fleet in World War I saved Germany from what the Royal Navy planned, practiced, and investigated before and during the war, namely, landing troops on Germany's North Sea coast, blockading in the North Sea, and penetrating into the Baltic Sea to attack the German coast there united with Russia's Baltic fleet, that the Tirpitz fleet prevented this, weighs little against the question of whether its construction partly caused the war. What is certain is that fleet construction in Germany further inflamed public sentiment in England prior to World War I 16 British Fleet 26. It is also certain that there is no plan or intention in Germany before the war to start a war for whatever against Britain. And it is also certain that the British government refuses a couple of times between 1901 and 12 to conclude a non-aggression or neutrality treaty or a friendship pact with the Reich government. London insists on its "right" to wage war against Germany. Tirpitz's and the Kaiser's hopes for greater security and a better alliance capability for the German Empire remain unfulfilled. England's Alternative The overall view of navies before World War I also includes a look at the U.S. Navy. Germany and the United States have been rearming their fleets at the same pace and in the same quantities since 1902. Thus, British threat fears could have been equally ignited by North America's fleet. The U.S. is also, as far as its industry and trade are concerned, in the fast lane vis-à-vis England. And they have been acquiring colonies since 1898

colonies: Cuba, the Philippines and Hawaii. Thus, the three competitive criteria that separate Great Britain from Germany apply equally to the U.S.: trade, colonies and fleet building. That England and the U.S. nevertheless came together before World War I, and not England and its neighbor Germany, must have its reasons. London's "balance-of-power strategy" is adequately explained. Another reason lies in America's obvious leaning toward England. Until the reign of U.S. President Mac Kinley, U.S. relations with the German Reich have always been friendly and balanced. The English-American relationship, on the other hand, is still under the mortgage of the former colonial rule of the British and England's colonial wars in America. This can be seen, for example, in the operational planning of the U.S. Navy, which envisages naval warfare against Great Britain with the "Fall of Red." 17 With the assassination of Mac Kinley in 1901 and the change to Theodore Roosevelt in the presidency, a new way of thinking set in in the United States. Roosevelt and his successor Wilson are clearly Anglophiles, seeking partnership with Great Britain.

But both believe that the time has come to replace England's supremacy with their own. Theodor Roosevelt obviously initially thought only of the United States being on an equal footing with England. Wilson goes further. In World War I under Wilson, the U.S. becomes the first naval power in place of England, the dollar replaces the pound sterling as the reserve currency, and the financial center of London is replaced by Wall Street. This triumphant advance of the USA then continues in the Second World War. In 1942, U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt forces the British to release the colonies 17 Schwarz, Page 39 27 en as the price for his arms aid. The U.S. replaces the old dominance of the British in the international framework with a new order of supra-national organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, and so on, which it initially dominates itself. Returning to the Anglo-German relationship from 1901 to 1914, England, although a "global player" before World War I, is strategically committed to Europe. The concern about the balance of power is related to the nearby German Empire alone. England could have been wary of the United States of America and sought Germany's proximity with equal concern and justification. There had been enough German entreaties for treaties between 1901 and 12. But the economic boom of its near competitor had fueled public opinion in Britain even before then. Competitive feelings, national pride, and the fixation of the balance-of-power idea on the near mainland in Europe did not allow for foresight among England's political elite. England should have seen before World War I that in the long run only the U.S. and not the German Empire would outstrip it. Only North America possesses the two indispensable prerequisites for a naval power: a fleet

and naval positions on the coasts of two oceans. Germany, on the other hand, has only one fleet. Without fleet positions, it has no chance of asserting itself against England on the seas in the long run. The U.S.A., too, has a far greater growth potential than Germany, as far as the number of people, the natural resources and the dynamics of the economy of this giant state are concerned. Thus, before the First World War, England's political elite failed to realize that it had to understand the balance-of-power globally. It fails to see that it will be the U.S. that will eclipse Britain within 40 years. England's image of the enemy The German-English estrangement is also recognizable in the change in the image that historians in England draw of the history of their German neighbor. Before the turn of the century 1900, the common descent of both peoples from the "free, brave, right-conscious and democratic" Germanic peoples¹⁸ was still a positive element that united them. The Germans as well as the British are not infrequently referred to as members of the Teutonic family of peoples¹⁹. The simultaneous rejection of the Romans and the French reflects the critical relationship of England to the strongest continental power at that time. From the turn of the century, Germany replaced France as the strongest military and economic power in continental Europe in the eyes of many Britons. Accordingly, England's Celtic heritage slowly gains historical attention and the Germanic commonality fades. ¹⁸ Messerschmidt, page 17 ¹⁹ Messerschmidt, pages 27 and 39 ²⁰ Politically particularly effective is the picture that English historians form of Prussia. Until about 1910, the Prussian kings, who were very liberal for their time, efficient, and attentive to the rights of their citizens, the capable military, and the patriotism of Stein and Hardenberg dominate the scene. Thereafter, the hitherto positive image of Prussia is reversed into the image of a Prussia as a state of unfreedom, obedience to authority, militarism and violence. This Prussia is often equated pars pro toto with the whole of Germany and as such, in the eyes of many British historians, represents the antithesis of the positively viewed liberal-parliamentary England. The "Teuton," decades ago the ancestor of the Germans and the British, even becomes a swear word for the Germans during World War I, and Prussianism becomes a "threat to civilization." ²¹ Not every English historian, however, sees the new German Empire in such gloomy colors. John Adam Cramb certainly admires the strength, the "heroism" and the discipline of the Germans. But what he writes in his 1914 work "Ger-many and England" sounds grim in a different way. "The Germans show the impulse of an active people, thirsty for expansion, hungry for world empire....Germany will come up against the English world²¹ ²² empire as Alaric came up against Rome²¹. " ²² This is a portent. During the war, the image of Germany worsens considerably. Historian John Headlam-Morley, in writings between 1915 and 1918, "proves" on the basis of history that "the highly organized military state of Germany threatened Europe with totalitarian autocracy, wanted to destroy the British world empire, and had had the plan for the achievement of ²³ autocracy long before the war." ²³ Here, universities are obviously comprehending what has been running through the minds of England's political elite for years. It is the seed for the later accusation of sole guilt at Versailles in 1919 and the accusation of world domination at Nuremberg in 1945. In England, meanwhile, people have long been clinging to an "enemy image of Germany." A large number of writings left behind bear witness to this. For example, the British ambassador Sir Francis Bertie wrote to a friend on June 11, 1904: "Your letter of the 2nd breathes mistrust of Germany and you are right. Germany has never done anything but fleece us. Es ²⁰ Messerschmidt, page 60 ²¹ The Visigoths under Alaric attack the Romans in Upper Italy in 401 AD and are defeated. ²² Messerschmidt, page 84 ²³ Messerschmidt, page 91 ²⁹ is false and greedy. Germany is in reality our economic and political enemy." ²⁴ In a memorandum dated October 30, 1906, Sir Charles Hardinge, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office in London, wrote: "It must be generally noted that Germany, as a result of her ambitious plans for a world policy, a maritime supremacy, and a military supremacy in Europe, is the only disturbing factor." ²⁵ The growing hostility of the British toward their German cousins is also registered abroad. The American Consul General in

Munich Gaffney, looking back on his visits to Britain before World War I, notes, "On my annual visits I was astonished and amused to note the growing hostility to Germany. My English friends did not hesitate to tell me, with complete frankness and the usual English insolence, that it was necessary to destroy Germany or Britain would lose her economic supremacy in world markets." 26 In the biography of former U.S. diplomat Henry White, a conversation between White and the leader of the Conservative Party of England and former Prime Minister Lord Balfour survives, which both had in London in 1910. At the time, White, an American, apparently saw Germany in the same role of an emerging country as the United States. His country, America, was also expanding in fleet building and trade. Balfour: "We are probably foolish not to find a reason to declare war on Germany before she builds too many ships and takes away our trade." White: "You are a high-minded man in private life. How can you contemplate anything so politically immoral as provoking a war against an inoffensive nation which has as good a right as you to maintain a fleet? If you want to keep up with German trade, work harder." Balfour: "That would mean lowering our standard of living. Maybe war would be easier for us." White: "I'm shocked that you can speak out on fundamental issues like that." Balfour: "Is that a question of right or wrong? But perhaps it is 27 a question of maintaining our supremacy." 27 24 MGFA, Navy, page 267 25 MGFA, Navy, page 268 26 Gaffney, page 11 27 Nevis, page 257 30 On April 19, 1911, Under Secretary of State Hardinge's deputy, Sir Arthur Nicolson, warns his boss in a letter to turn away from Russia and toward Germany in foreign policy: "It is impossible to convince the supporters of such a policy that Germany will not enter into a friendship on an equal footing. We shall be forced in the not too distant future to conform to German wishes on every new question." 28 Measured against the goals of German foreign policy, this is persecution mania. The goal of Berlin's foreign policy with London before World War I is precisely that "friendship on an equal footing." Otherwise, Berlin is trying to break the ring of anti-German alliances that France, Russia, and Britain made between 1904 and 1907. In addition, the goals of German foreign policy are to acquire trading rights, mining and oil production concessions, and colonies where this is possible without wars. This, too, stands disturbingly between Great Britain and Germany. The Morocco crises England's clear position on France's side was demonstrated in 1904 and 1911 in the so-called two Morocco crises. Both are about Paris trying to extend its influence over Morocco, breaking an 1880 treaty that had established the sovereign rights of the Sultan of Morocco and German trade concessions. The Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911, three years before World War I, goes down in history as the "Panther Leap." The incident shows that Britain is already ready and willing to enter into a war with Germany even over a nullity like this. In 1911, Paris made its second attempt in just a few years to incorporate Morocco into its colonial empire. The Foreign Office in Berlin, fearful of losing German trade and mining concessions in Morocco, orders a German warship named the Panther to call at the port of Agadir outside the French occupation zone and "fly the flag" there to protect German interests. The "Panther," a small multipurpose ship for river and coastal service in German colonies, is ripe for overhaul at the time and therefore on its way back from West Africa to the shipyard in Germany²⁹. It is heading for Casablanca to bunker coal for the onward journey, but is diverted beforehand. Thus the Panther, almost out of fuel and ripe for repair, docks in Agadir on July 1, 1911. The British government immediately interprets this as a violent demonstration of German power overseas and insinuates to the German government that it wants to have a German war port docked in Agadir. The British government asked the German government to comment, but before it did, it took a stand itself. 28 MGFA, Navy, page 268 29 Hildebrandt, pages 213 f 31 Part of the Royal Navy is mobilized, the coal supply for the navy's ships is replenished, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George declares on July 21 on behalf of the British government "that his country will go to war alongside France in the event of a German challenge." France supplied the powder keg, England waved

the fuse, and Germany stood as the sinner. The governments in London and Paris had apparently already agreed in 1904, without the knowledge of the government in Berlin, that Morocco was French territory of interest and that England would get a free hand in Egypt and Sudan in return. There German trade and German mining rights in Morocco interfered. But a dispute between the French and the Germans over a few German rights in Morocco and the appearance of a small colonial service ship are not in themselves reasons to threaten war. England is again concerned with making France strong as a counterforce to Germany, and it is concerned with a serious warning to put an end to German competition with war if it continues to be restive. As far as there is a desire for further colonies on the German side before the First World War, this should not have been a reason for the coming German-British clashes either. After all, the German Colonial Ministry always tries to move its wishes concerning Africa amicably with the corresponding ministry in London. In July 1913, for example, the two ministries in London and Berlin agreed on a draft treaty on the eventual division of Portuguese colonies.³⁰ In the Germany of 1914 and 1918, hardly anyone yet understood their own country's rise in industry and trade as a reason for war. Even such crises as the two in Morocco, in which Germany was merely trying to get a last piece of the colonial pie, left Germans with no sense of German guilt. At most, they feed the fear of isolating themselves in the world. After all, unlike the British Empire of the last 20 years, the German Reich has not attacked any other white nation and taken colonies from it. The Baghdad Railway Germany also emerges as a new competitor to England in the Middle East; first in trade and, a few years before the start of World War I, in oil production. From 1888 onwards, German industrialists and bankers endeavor to open up the Ottoman Empire as an economic region for Germany. To this end, they build a rail link from the Balkans to the city of Konya in southern Anatolia. In 1903, construction continues on the line, which is to run through the oil region ³⁰ Gebhardt, Vol. 4/1, pp. 29 32 32 from Mosul in present-day Iraq to Baghdad and later to Kuwait. The German Kaiser and the Deutsche Bank try to mobilize English capital for this purpose, which succeeds to a small extent after efforts. In 1912, the Turkish government signed over to Deutsche Bank the concessions for all oil and mineral deposits on both sides of the railroad as far as Mosul as compensation for its costs on the Baghdad Railway.³¹ Thus, the German Empire became economically active in a region that Great Britain also wanted to develop for itself. At the same time, the British naval power was trying to gain a foothold in Arabia and Persia, which were still Ottoman at the time, and to secure the oil deposits discovered there. In 1899, the British signed a treaty with the local sheikh in Kuwait, in which he promised that neither he nor his heirs would ever sign any treaties concerning the establishment of third powers in Kuwait.³² In 1901, around the time of the oil discovery, London sent warships to Kuwait and forced the Ottoman government to accept a British "protectorate" over the sheikdom of Kuwait.³³ In 1913, England also had the oil production concessions there transferred to it by the sheikh of Kuwait in return for monetary gifts. Now German oil activities, trade, and the German railroad to Iraq threaten to become serious competition for British penetration of Iraq from the south. Above all, the German railroad to Kuwait would have devalued the British maritime transportation monopoly there and given the Germans their own access to the Persian Gulf. The German View of England In Germany before World War I, on the one hand, one fails to recognize the danger posed by England's claim to its own security and to supremacy on the five seas. But on the other hand, one does take note of British world power politics and its ruthlessness. The conquest of the Burian-South African states of Oranje and Transvaal in 1902, for example, in violation of international law, together with the gold deposits there, left a strong impression on the Germans. The British claim to naval power and their often ruthless foreign policy therefore did not make England appear as the guardian of democracy and human rights before World War I and World War II, and certainly not as the protector of nations under attack. This image of England is built up only after 1945, when the prehistory of both wars is forgotten in Germany.

Before the two wars, Great Britain was first and foremost seen as a consistent defender of its own interests. 31 Engdahl, page 46 32 Engdahl, page VII 33 Engdahl, page 45 33 Even after the lost First World War, the vast majority of the population in Germany does not recognize that their own empire challenged the self-claim of the more powerful British to be number one in a European power and "pecking order." This self-claim by the British before World War I has no moral legitimacy, any more than Hitler's later claim to German supremacy in southeastern Europe. Both claims are justified solely by the Darwinian worldview of the time. In Germany, even after the lost war in 1919, people still do not want to accept this and therefore do not see why the English should make the Germans pay so mercilessly in the Treaty of Versailles. The victory of Darwinism over morality in some ways prepares the way for Hitler's later ruthlessness in foreign policy. The treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain show the German and Austrian people how to deal with each other in Europe. French-German Disputes The tension between Germans and French that characterized the relationship between the two peoples in 1914 has far deeper roots than that between English and Germans. As early as 1552, the kings of France began to expand their territory eastward toward the Rhine. Alsace-Lorraine They took advantage of internal German disputes and the pressure of the Turks on the empire to annex first the German fortified cities of Metz, Toul and Verdun, then ten Alsatian cities, then parts of Lorraine and finally all of Alsace. The German mother tongue of the Alsatian population was no obstacle to the French.

However, the French attempt to annex Luxembourg, which was German at the time, failed. During the 30 Years War and the War of the Palatinate Succession, France uses the given opportunities to invade Germany and to incinerate an area 160 kilometers long and about the same width in the Electoral Palatinate and Baden-Durlach. Villages, fields, vineyards and towns are burned, including Worms, Bingen, Mannheim, Heidelberg and Speyer. The French thus create a wasteland belt to prevent the annexation of Alsace from ever being reversed from German soil. The vandalism of the French in the Palatinate leaves the local population with an image of France that is remembered until the Second World War with the evil word of the hereditary enemy. In northern Germany, it was the French occupation of 1806-13 that left an unpleasant image of the French, with high contributions, taxes in kind, quartering and the obligation to participate as vassals in Napoleon's wars. 34 Map 1: Alsace-Lorraine In 1870, France attempts once again to annex what was then German Luxembourg (under the Dutch crown), the Palatinate (now largely Rhineland-Palatinate), and the Saarland, and to push its border eastward. It causes, declares, starts and loses the war with Germany and has to pay for it with the cession of Alsace-Lorraine. Germany, for its part, pays with the hatred of the French and with the fact that France now remains a new ground for war against Germany. The change of Alsace-Lorraine between the two neighboring countries has always taken place without the vote of the people concerned. Referendums on affiliation are not yet common in 1681, 1766 and 1871. In 1872, the population can "opt". 10.3 % declared their allegiance to France and 5 % emigrated there³⁴. But the mood in both parts of the country remained pro-French for a long time. Nevertheless, even in 1919, after the forced reassignment of Alsace and Lorraine, France did not dare to question the population concerned about their wishes to belong to France or Germany. This is obviously too risky for the French. After all, a 1900 census had revealed only 11.5% French-speaking inhabitants in the two parts of the country that had been re-annexed by France. 34 Meyers Konversationslexikon, keyword Alsace-Lorraine 35 Back to France before the First World War. France seeks allies at the right time to reclaim Alsace and Lorraine when the opportunity is right. In 1892, it concludes the so-called Dual Alliance with Russia. In 1912,

the President of the Third Republic Poincaré assured the Russian government that France would support Russia militarily under all circumstances, regardless of whether Russia was attacked or started a

war itself³⁵. Furthermore, France concluded the "entente cordiale" with Great Britain in 1904 and obtained England's promise of her support in the event of war with the German Empire in 1911. This gives France two powerful allies, Great Britain and Russia. The rivalry in the colonies Besides the Alsace dispute, it is the race for the last "open" colonies that poisons the Franco-German neighborhood. The race for colonies was still in full swing around the world at the turn of the century 1900. The United States of North America, for example, takes the Philippines and the island of Puerto Rico as U.S. colonies in 1898. Great Britain annexes the diamond mines of Kimberley in South Africa in 1900, and Spain the same year annexes the Rio Muni province in southern Cameroon. In 1902, England conquers the Boer states of Oranje and Transvaal with their rich gold deposits. Japan takes Korea in 1905. In 1907 Russia declares North Persia and England South Persia as their zones of influence and in 1912 Italy makes Libya a colony and Spain two coastal strips in Morocco. In this pursuit of overseas territories, France comes into conflict with Germany in Morocco. In 1880, the Treaty of Madrid had granted the Sultan of Morocco sovereignty in Tangier and Germany free trading rights throughout the country³⁶. When France attempted to seize the Tangier area as well, the German emperor and the imperial government were unwilling to swallow the French breach of treaty and their own disadvantage in this way. Kaiser Wilhelm II therefore goes to Tangier in person and, in consultation with the Reich government, protests against the French effort to "peacefully penetrate" all of Morocco, including Tangier, as the French call it. The result of this intervention in the so-called First Moroccan Crisis of 1904-1905 is a Franco-German treaty that both recognizes France's "special political interest" in Morocco and grants Germany a stake in the economic development of the country. But this compromise is not even half a victory. The price is too high for that. Germany slips into an international isolation with the Morocco dispute, in which it disturbs France's circles, which will not be resolved until the First World War. Germany rightly insists on the Madrid Treaty, which is still in force, but England and Italy³⁵ Grenfell, page 84³⁶ Löwenstein, page 470³⁶ stand behind France's Morocco ambitions because, in return, they have previously bargained for a free hand for their own colonial plans. Thus, the compromise around Tangier and Morocco remains rather a victory for France. In 1911, in the already described Second Moroccan Crisis, the next point goes to France. The French government has Morocco occupied by its own troops under the pretext of having to ensure order there in the event of internal unrest. Paris declares Morocco a French protectorate, which means nothing else than that Morocco now also belongs to France's colonies. What follows has already been partly mentioned in the description of the German-British relationship. The German gunboat Panther calls at Agadir. Germany demands compensation from France in the Congo and, for the loss of German trade in Morocco, receives a piece of French Congo, which is awarded to German Cameroon as border land. A meaningless land gain three years before World War I. Of considerable importance, on the other hand, is the anger of the French over Germany's new competition in Africa. Thus, France had many reasons to settle accounts with Germany when the opportunity arose. It is the will to regain Alsace and Lorraine. It is the anger at Germany as a colonial competitor, and it is the concern that the German neighbor could grow stronger as a land and new sea power. Germany is aware of the deep resentment felt by the French over the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, but there is no sense of injustice among the Germans because of it. Land cessions after lost wars were common then as they still are today. And the conquered population is predominantly German according to the mother tongue. Before the First World War, as many as 1.3 million citizens in Alsace and Lorraine used their German mother tongue and not quite 200 thousand spoke French. From the German point of view, therefore, Alsace and Lorraine are not seen as the cause of the war. It was in the Balkans in 1914, recognizable to everyone. The terrible revenge that the French took on the Germans after the war was therefore not understood in Germany. Hitler will profit from the intemperance of this revenge. Russia's Relationship to Germany The prehistory of the disaster of

Versailles and Saint-Germain also includes the relationship of the three empires Russia Habsburg Germany to each other. Although Russia and Germany are basically neighbors with no territorial claims on each other, and although they do not compete anywhere in the colonies, they do move apart after 1890. There are four main reasons for this. The first concerns the German-Russian relationship in a direct way. Berlin fails to renew a reinsurance treaty with St. Petersburg that expires in 1890. The other three reasons are indirect. Opponents of Germany seek Russia's support or Germany supports Russia's opponents. Thus, this is the second reason France continues to successfully court Russia as a power in Germany's rear. Third, Germany stands by Austria-Hungary, Russia's rival in the Balkans. And fourth, Russia's alliance strategy to protect its own interests in the Far East, in Persia Afghanistan, in the Balkans and at the Dardanelles leads this great country into the camp of the opponents of Habsburg and the German Empire with a series of treaties until the First World War. The long run-up to the Russo-German outbreak of war in 1914 began many years earlier in the Balkans. Since 1875, the multi-ethnic state of the Turkish Ottomans had been disintegrating piece by piece. Since the new states that were formed in the Balkans from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire lacked clear ethnic boundaries, this region became a trouble spot in Europe for 40 years. Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia fought many wars over borders and territories. The quarrels of the Balkan states always radiate to the neighbors, who fight here for their own zones of influence. Thus, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Italy and Greece are usually involved. France, Great Britain and Germany are indirectly drawn in as mediators and partisans. Germany was generally on Austria's side, but in the Balkan crises of 1909, 1912 and 1913, the German government nevertheless acted as mediator.

acted as a mediator. In 1909 and 1913, Germany twice dissuaded Habsburg from going to war in the Balkans. With its general support of Austria in all Balkan crises, the German government nevertheless alienated the Russians and the French. Thus, Germany ultimately pays for its commitment to peace with Russia's hostility and with increasing isolation among the major states in Europe. Russia's path to the First World War was also marked out domestically. The glaring social injustices in the still feudal tsarist state and the separatist aspirations of non-Russian nations provide an explosive force that threatens to dismember the tsarist empire from within. There are three groups that hope a new war will resolve Russian problems in their favor. The non-Russian national movements see in the war the chance for the defeat of Russia and thus for the freedom of their peoples. Conversely, the country's high nobility believes that a new war could once again weld together for a time its empire, which is threatened from within. And then there are the revolutionaries of the class struggle, who want to use the war to revolt against the upper middle classes and nobility. Thus there are strong forces in all strata and peoples of Russia that would welcome a war. In 1914, in the dispute between Austria-Hungary and Serbia over responses to the Sarajevo murder, it is the so-called Grand Dukes group that is pushing for war against Habsburg and the German Empire. In the Russian army, war with Germany has long been a topic of discussion, when no one can yet suspect anything about the assassination in Sarajevo. Thus, the most widespread military magazine in Russia, RASVJEDSCHIK, wrote as early as January 1914: "We are all well aware that we are preparing for war on the Western Front, primarily against the Germans. Therefore, we must base all our military exercises on the assumption that we are waging war against the Germans. For example, one maneuver party must always be called the "German". Not only the troops, but the whole Russian people must be accustomed to the idea that we are arming ourselves for a war of annihilation against the Germans and that the German states must be smashed, even if we lose hundreds of thousands of people in the process." 37 In the German army, on the other hand, shortly before the outbreak of war, the Russians were not attuned to this mood. In 1913, Chief of Staff General Moltke the Younger has the annual revision of deployment plans toward Russia discontinued because he does not consider it urgent. This is a sign that Germany has no aggressive plans towards Russia. Germany

as enfant terrible Germany before World War I is the enfant terrible among the "adults" of Europe, the terrible child, literally. A child because the new, the second German Empire of 1871 counts just 43 years at the beginning of the war. That is really only a child's age next to France, which had already grown together into a nation-state under King Louis XL from 1461, and next to the kingdom and nation-state of England, which had been united under King Henry

VII from 1485. The Germans, who are nevertheless aware of their history of more than 1000 years, try to catch up in these only 43 years some things which the old, established neighbors have created in centuries. Terrible, terrible are the Germans for the neighbors, because their catching up is really terrible for them. A fleet buildup that is far too extensive for the taste of the British and an army buildup starting in 1913 that runs concurrently with that in France create suspicion and fears among the "ancients," who themselves already have a large fleet and army. The upswing in the now coalesced economic area of Germany, which pushes England and France to third and fourth place in the world rankings, is a burden for the established competitors. And the political weight with which the German Empire has been actively influencing all disputes and changes in Europe and Africa since Bismarck often disturbs the circles of Russia, Serbia, France, Greece and England. In addition, there is the clumsiness of the Germans, 37 Reichsarchiv, Vol. 2, Page 17 39 who do not discreetly conceal the growth of their strength and their new self-confidence, but certainly let foreign countries hear it. Thus, before the beginning of World War I, the German Empire was maneuvered into an unfavorable position by its economic rise, by its armaments, by deficiencies in its alliance policy, and, in addition, by the Kaiser's clumsy speeches and interviews before foreign countries. The demonstrable will for peace of the emperor and the imperial government were too often drowned out by strained imperial speeches. When, before the outbreak of war, Germany sided so unhesitatingly with the Habsburgs, Paris, St. Petersburg and London suspected that Berlin was concerned with more than just the conflict in Serbia. They suspect that Germany wants to use the row over Serbia to gain land of its own. However, there were no hints or clues to this effect from Germany before World War I. The tangle of conflicting interests Before World War I, the interests of Russia, Serbia, France, England, Habsburg, and Germany crossed on a number of lines. Russia, after losing the war in Asia against Japan in 1904, turns back to its possibilities in Europe. The imminent disintegration of the great Ottoman Empire tempts it to fight again for the free waterway to the Mediterranean. Thus, Russia is interested in conquering Constantinople and the Dardanelles and supporting the Serbs in their intention to expand to the Adriatic. Russia also feels that it is the protecting power of all Slavs and the Greek Orthodox world. France wants to redeem the defeat of 1870-71 and reconquer Alsace-Lorraine. It also aspires to become militarily again the first land power on the continent. England feels that its colonial empire and the trade routes it controls are endangered by German naval construction. It sees the construction of the German Baghdad railroad and the German oil production concessions in Iraq as an unwanted encroachment on an economic zone that it had hitherto considered its own. Germany's oil production near Mosul and the new railroad connection there could be cut off by England if Serbia were to side with England in a war and interrupt the German railroad line in the Balkans. Last but not least, Germany is strategically Britain's number one potential adversary since it has caught up with or surpassed France as the continent's first power in almost every respect. Serbia, an independent state since 1878, wants to become the leading power of a new great empire in the Balkans and, to this end, to unite the small neighboring countries into "Greater Serbia. A Greater Serbian movement outside the 40 official state power is calling for this expansionist idea through propaganda and repeated acts of terror in Serbia's neighboring countries. This also affected the Habsburg territories of Croatia and Bosnia. As a multiethnic state, Habsburg endeavors to undermine the independence aspirations of its non-German member peoples, partly by giving them more autonomy and partly by giving them a share in the central power. But the

problem of the multiethnic state was not solved in 1914. Habsburg, which includes many Slavic nations, can hardly avoid conflicts with Russia, which sees itself as the patron of all Slavs. In addition, there is a source of conflict with the Serbs. The Habsburg government formally annexed the two formerly Ottoman provinces of Herzegovina and Bosnia to its own territory in 1908 and paid for them to the Ottomans in 1909 with a purchase agreement. By international decision, both parts of the country had been administered by Austria-Hungary for 30 years anyway. With this land acquisition, Serbia's desired expansion in the direction of the Adriatic was blocked. Between 1871 and 1914, Germany experienced rapid population growth and the transition to an industrial state. As a result, it is increasingly dependent on imports of food for its people and raw materials for its industries. Thus, the new German Empire is forced to seek an appropriate place in world trade, where the good places are already occupied. The German efforts to acquire colonies from 1884 onward, to expand its own share of world trade, to buy mining and oil production concessions overseas and to open up the Middle East for itself by building railroads are first and foremost responsible efforts to secure the food and livelihood base of its rapidly growing population. Secondly, they are the risky endeavor to present itself as a great power like England or France. Thus the interests of the six states just described intersect in El-saß-Lothringen, in Serbia, at the Dardanelles, in the oil fields of the Middle East and in world trade. The interests become a stumbling block and a fate where all lines intersect, in the Balkans. Austria is interested in the status quo, Serbia in expansion, Russia in Serbia's success, Germany in the rail links to the Middle East, England in Serbia as a bar to the German railroad to Middle Eastern oil, and France in a weak Germany that can no longer defend Alsace-Lorraine. The Spark of Sarajevo The description of the long and complicated chain reaction from the murder in Sarajevo to the outbreak of war is preceded by this short version to give an overview. 41 When, in 1914, a Bosnian Serb assassin killed the Habsburg heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo, Bosnia

Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the situation between Habsburg and Serbia came to an unexpected head. The German Empire immediately threw its weight behind Habsburg in loyalty to the alliance. The government in Vienna abuses this as a blank check and overdoes its threats and ultimatums to sovereign Serbia, for whose "benefit" the assassination was committed. Serbia seeks the backing of its protecting power, Russia. Russia, in turn, assures itself of France's loyalty to the alliance. And as agreed, France can count on the help of England. Thus, shortly after the Sarajevo murder, Serbia, Russia, France and England faced off on one side and Austria-Hungary and Germany on the other. In this tense situation, Austria-Hungary sends the Serbs an ultimatum. This was followed by preparations for war in France and Russia. When both countries mobilize their troops and England does the same with the fleet, the German Reich is forced to move, but later mobilizes faster and attacks France first. In the process, the German army command marches some of its troops through neutral Belgium. England then declares war on the German Empire. This is followed by declarations of war by England, France and Russia against Turkey. Next, Japan joins in, declaring war on the German Empire in order to acquire Germany's colonies in the Pacific. And Italy, initially in alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, switches to the other side in 1915, also declaring war on its allies to advance its borders from the south to the crest of the Alps. The constellation remained like this until the USA entered the war in 1917, with Austria-Hungary, Germany and Turkey fighting against Great Britain, France, Russia, Japan and Italy. The Balkan countries take one side and the other. The chain reaction of July 1914 When on June 28, 1914, the heir to the Habsburg throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated by a Great Serbian assassin, the whole world was initially outraged and on the side of Habsburg. Only the newspapers in Serbia glorify the assassination.³⁸ In this situation, Kaiser Wilhelm II assures Austria-Hungary of Germany's "unconditional loyalty to the alliance. The emperor thus acts in conformity with the treaty, but the assurance is also a false and dangerous signal. Habsburg, initially reluctant to take vigorous action

against Serbia, now, with the German assurance behind it, sharpens its tone against the Serbian government. But by now the worldwide outrage over the Sarajevo murder has largely subsided, and the old partisanship among states is taking hold again. 38 Gebhardt, Vol. 4/1, p. 42 42 In Germany, the worst was not initially expected. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Reich Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg, State Secretary (Minister) of Foreign Affairs von Jagow, Chief of General Staff von Moltke and Chief of Naval Management von Tirpitz, all of them take their vacation scheduled for that time in these days and leave the Reich capital Berlin³⁹. None of them seriously believes that a major war could develop out of this new Balkan crisis. Neither the army nor the navy are ordered to make any preparations for war. Even the press is asked not to write anything about danger of war. There is not the slightest hint of a German intention to wage war in this "hot" summer of 1914. The situation was different in England. There, preparations are quietly being made for the eventuality that the Serbian crisis should develop into a war. Secretary

of the Navy Churchill and the First Sea Lord Prince von Battenberg ordered a mobilization exercise of the fleet for the period from July 15 to 25⁴⁰. This means that the Royal Navy will be made ready for war before the sparks fly in the Balkans. At the end of that exercise, there will be no demobilization⁴¹. The fleet remains on the move to embark, if necessary, the promised six army divisions to northern France. England, far away and not threatened, prepares its part in the war against Germany, even before Habsburg pours oil on the fire with his ultimatum to Serbia, and even before the German Empire mobilizes or anyone declares war. The British thus have a 14-day head start on the mobilization of German naval and land forces. It is not until two weeks after this unofficial preparation for war that Britain officially announces the mobilization of the fleet on August 2, thus keeping up appearances. Meanwhile, Vienna tightened its grip on the Serbian government. The Serbian government consulted with the Russian government in Petersburg. In this tense situation, French President Poincare and his Prime Minister Viviani are also in St. Petersburg from July 20-23 on a long-scheduled state visit. Both take the opportunity to reaffirm the French-Russian Dual Alliance of 1894 against Germany⁴². They assure the Russians of their loyalty to the alliance in the event of war. Thus, the recklessness of Wilhelm II with his declaration of alliance loyalty to Habsburg is contrasted with the same recklessness of Poincare with such an assurance to Russia. On July 23, Habsburg issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the Serbs demanding that they stop all anti-Austrian agitation propaganda in Serbia, allow Austrian organs to assist in the fight against terror in Serbia, and allow Austrian officials to participate in the judicial investigation of the Sarajevo 39 Binder, page 48 40 Frost, page 22 41 Reference in Churchill Memoirs, page 424 42 dtv Geschichte, page 122 43 murder. The last two demands go too far for the Serbian government. The Russians, now certain that the French would be on their side in the event of war, decide for their part to support Serbia on July 25. They make a promise of aid to the Serbian government. The latter then rejects the Vienna ultimatum with a partly dismissive and partly accommodating note and mobilizes the Serbian army. This was followed on the same evening by the partial mobilization of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces against Serbia. It is the arrogance of power with which the great Austro-Hungarian Empire attempts in 1914 to impose Austrian officials and organs of terror on the small, yet sovereign Serbia. However, one can see the process in another way. It is not enough for the Habsburg government in 1914 to prosecute the murder and fight the Greater Serbian movement on its own soil. It is a matter of life for Habsburg to break the back of the movement and terror in Serbia, just as it is inevitable for the Americans to fight terrorism outside their own country in 2001. Remarkable is the reaction of the German emperor when he holds in his hands the text of the Serbian answer of July 25, 1914. He judges: "... Thus every reason for war falls away... I would never have ordered mobilization on that basis." ⁴³ From July 26 to 31, Germany and England tried to mediate several times. London proposed a Balkan conference. On July 27, Kaiser Wilhelm II tried in vain to

persuade the courts in Petersburg and Vienna to relent. Vienna merely declared that it had no intention of acquiring Serbian territory in this dispute with Belgrade. Despite all German and English efforts, Habsburg declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914. Now the court in Petersburg also acts. On the 29th, Russia mobilizes 13 army corps on the borders with Austria-Hungary. On the same day, the government in London asked the government in Berlin to intervene once again in Vienna. The British Foreign Office, however, already announced that England intended to remain neutral only as long as France was not involved in the war⁴⁴. This is the first quiet threat to Germany, since Great Britain cannot wage a naval war with Austria. England stands "at arms length" against Germany, this early hint of willingness to wage war alongside France reveals. This is the second threat in three years since the Morocco crisis of 1911. ⁴³ Binder, page 49 ⁴⁴ Binder, page 42 ⁴⁴ On July 30, there are two opposing impulses from Germany. General von Moltke, Chief of the German General Staff, sees the military danger that may arise from this crisis for the German Empire. If war were to break out and Russia plus France were to fight on the side of Serbia, it would be essential for Germany's survival that the Austro-Hungarian army be ready for war and bind the Russians. So von Moltke urges his Austrian comrade, General von Hötzendorf, to speed up the general mobilization of Austria-Hungary's troops for purely military reasons. On the same day, Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg urgently advises the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, to desist from war with Serbia. And also on this day Kaiser Wilhelm II tries once again to dissuade his cousin Tsar Nikolay II from going to war. He urges him to withdraw the partial mobilization of the previous day. The tsar initially relented, but then bowed to pressure from his foreign minister and the war party at home. Now Russia even mobilizes completely, i.e. also against Germany. Now the German side tries it again with tougher tactics. On July 31, Emperor Wilhelm II sent an ultimatum to St. Petersburg demanding that the Russian government withdraw the mobilization orders within twelve hours, otherwise, according to the note, a state of war between Germany and Germany would be declared.

note, a state of war between Germany and Russia was inevitable. The Russian government did not respond. It has obviously already ordered the attack of its troops against Germany. On August 1 at 7 p.m., after the expiration of the ultimatum, the German ambassador in Petersburg hands over the German declaration of war⁴⁵ and at the same time the first Russian cavalry units cross the German border. The distance between Petersburg and the German-Russian border in East Prussia and the official channels between the tsar's court and the Russian squadron commanders in their deployment rooms on the border are much too far, especially at that time, for an order to attack to have been passed from there to there within one or even a few hours. The order to attack and thus to open war against Germany, which was still waiting, was undoubtedly issued in St. Petersburg even before the German declaration of war. Thus Russia started the war, and Germany declared it first. In Versailles, four years later, the German declarations of war are considered an essential part of Germany's sole guilt of the war. So it should not be surprising that Hitler learns the lesson in 1939 and refrains from declaring war. July 30 was a fateful day. On that day of crisis, Kaiser Wilhelm II failed to bundle the activities of the cabinet and the military and to commit the Chief of the General Staff to his peace line. However, Count Moltke, the Chief of the General Staff, who is acting without instructions from his emperor, correctly assesses the decisions at the tsar's court. That the escalation between Austria and Russia on July 30 would not have occurred without Moltke's insistence at Höt-zendorf can neither be proven nor disproven in retrospect. The die for the war had obviously already been cast politically at the tsar's court. With this development, which occurred so suddenly on August 1, 1914, Germany was suddenly faced with the danger of being caught between two fronts. The two great neighbors to the east and to the west have been bound by treaty against the German Reich since 1894. A war on two fronts is an existential threat for Germany, especially since Germany has still not mobilized at that time. The Reich government

therefore inquires in Paris on July 31 how France intends to behave in a Russian-German confrontation. The French government stalled the German government and answered ambiguously: "one would act according to French interests. This could mean peace or war over Alsace-Lorraine. Paris evades the obvious German desire for further peace between the German Reich and France and instead prepares for war with Germany. The French government orders the mobilization of its armed forces on August 1. Germany is now already four days behind the partial mobilization and three days behind the general mobilization in Russia. Time is running out. The days in which the Kaiser and the Imperial Government had tried to mediate between Habsburg and Russia were now missing for Germany's own preparations for war. The German Empire cannot afford to wait any longer. After receiving the bad news from Paris that France does not agree to remain neutral and after the French general mobilization becomes known on August 1, the Reich government also announces the mobilization of German troops. Germany does not have the forces to fight against Russia and France at the same time. Above all, it cannot do so from the defensive against two together numerically superior opponents. It cannot wait until one enemy comes "from the front" and the other enemy "from the rear". Thus in the pincers, the Germans have only one way out: to get ahead of the two opponents and to attack and defeat them one after the other. Germany can either attack Russia alone first. Berlin estimates that this would take a long time and expose the western border, which is now only weakly occupied, to the danger of a French attack. Or Germany can first try to defeat France, which it believes it can do in a relatively short time, and only then turn against Russia. Such is the assessment of its own possibilities in Berlin before World War I, and such

46 Binder, page 56 46 was the way the German Grand General Staff prepared its deployment plans for this worst-case scenario. That the fears of the German General Staff were not plucked out of thin air is shown at the beginning of the war, when it turns out that France's troops are not only deploying for the defense of their own country, but also from the beginning for an attack against Germany with an offensive in the direction of the Upper Rhine⁴⁷. Since France is mobilizing from August 1, making preparations for war, obviously waiting for the German troops to march off in the direction of Russia and refusing to declare its neutrality, Germany must expect France to strike as soon as Russia stirs. Thus the strategically worst case for Germany has occurred. On August 3, Berlin declares war on Paris in order not to fall into France's trap later on. Simultaneously with the declaration of war, Berlin inquires in Brussels whether the Belgian government would allow German troops to march against France through Belgian territory. Berlin guarantees the integrity of Belgian territory and agrees to pay the Belgian government all costs of the march and to compensate it for any damage. The Belgian government rejects this. The use of Belgian territory for its own deployment in a feared war with France, or even with France and England, has long been included in all defense preparations on the German side. The Grand General Staff assumes that in a war the English and French will not hesitate to march against Germany through Belgium, Luxembourg and Holland. Thus, the complicated deployment planning of German army troops for the event of war has been made with the inclusion of the Belgian railroad network. This was mainly because the Germans thought that the best chance of success against the French army would be a northern encirclement along the Channel coast. And the way to northern France leads through Belgium. This deployment plan of the Grand General Staff is foolish from a foreign policy point of view, and to push it through against the will of the Belgian government is a violation of international law. But militarily, the plan promises success in protecting one's own country, especially when Germany must fight for its existence on two sides at the same time. The invasion of neutral Belgium by German troops on August 3, 1914, was preceded by a diplomatic poker game in which London and Berlin were counting more on advantage than on peace. As early as the night of July 28-29, German Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg tries to sound out England's

intentions in the event that the Balkan conflict should spread to France and Germany 47 Ploetz Volksausgabe, Seite 388 47. Von Bethmann Hollweg summons the English ambassador in Berlin, Sir Goschen, to see him and tells him that Germany wishes to keep peace with England and does not intend to make any territorial acquisitions at French expense in the event of the war extending to France. Moreover, von Bethmann Hollweg hints that, depending on France's behavior, Germany might be forced to violate Belgium's neutrality for a limited period⁴⁸. When asked about England's attitude and behavior, Ambassador Sir Goschen replies that his government does not wish to commit itself at this time. The day after Bethmann Hollweg's conversation with Sir Goschen, Sir Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, begins a dark double game. He informs successively the German and French ambassadors in London of England's attitude. To the German, Prince Lichnowsky, he informs that his country intends to remain neutral only as long as the war is confined to Russia and Austria. But if Germany and France were to be drawn into this war, England could not stand aloof much longer. To the French, Ambassador Cambon, he lets the same thing be known in a coded way⁴⁹ so that the French government can count on England's aid in arms. In this way, Grey discreetly gives France to understand that it has a free ride to war with Germany in the dispute of the Russians, Austrians and Serbs. As Grey puts it, it can confidently let itself be "dragged into" a war. On the following day the situation for the Germans became even worse. On July 30, Russia makes general mobilization. Germany is automatically against Russia as a result of the treaty with Austria-Hungary. France has a treaty with Russia and thus stands against Germany. London knows that the German Empire is now in a tight spot and will most likely have to violate Belgium's neutrality to save itself. This is England's ticket to war. In this German quandary, on July 31, the British government asks the German and French governments to respect Belgium's neutrality. France immediately assures the British of this. Germany asks back whether England, for its part, will maintain neutrality and peace toward Germany if it renounces the march through Belgian territory. Now England would have had it in her hands,

the Belgians from the German march. But London, justifying its declaration of war on the German Reich three days later on the grounds of German violation of Belgian neutrality, is not prepared to stay away from the war that is brewing in favor of Belgium. Foreign Minister Grey pledges neither neutrality nor peace at this height of the crisis.⁵⁰ The British government does not want to miss the chance to defeat the German ⁴⁸ Stegemanns, page 361 ⁴⁹ Stegemanns, page 359 ⁵⁰ Stegemanns, page 363 ⁴⁸ Reich first with the help of the French and the Russians in a land war and then to force it out of the markets, out of the colonies and out of naval construction. On August 1, 1914, the worst case scenario for the German side occurred. The war with Russia could not be prevented. The first Russian units are already on East Prussian territory. France is mobilized and Germany in the pincers cannot wait any longer. The concrete existential threat to the Reich forces the Emperor, the Chancellor and the Grand General Staff to make use of the controversial deployment plan through Belgium, if necessary without the approval of the Belgians. On August 2, the German government asks the Belgian government for permission to march troops through Belgian territory into northern France. The Belgians refuse. In the meantime, the die has long been cast in London. On August 2, before German troops enter Belgian territory, England officially announces the mobilization of its fleet. The fleet, however, has been secretly ready since the mobilization exercise on July 25. On the same day, August 2, English Foreign Minister Grey informs the French government that the British fleet will come to the aid of the French if the German fleet begins hostile actions against the French⁵¹. Moreover, England had already secretly promised the French six army divisions in 1911 in case of war. Thus, on August 2, Britain is already ready for war and committed. As an i-point in this intrigue game, Minister Grey places himself in front of the House of Commons in London on the day after, the 3rd, and explains to the obviously unsuspecting deputies that England has not yet committed itself in any way with regard to the

war beginning in Europe⁵². When German troops begin to advance through Belgium against France on August 3, London issues an ultimatum to Berlin, demanding that it withdraw its troops from Belgium immediately. Germany, however, can no longer do without the march through the neutral country and continues the march. This was followed the next day, on August 4, by England's declaration of war on the German Reich. As far as Belgian neutrality was concerned, England and Germany had each built a bridge to peace once in the last seven days before the war began. But Germany did not want to lose its military advantage over France without England's declaration of neutrality, and England did not want to give up its chance to participate in a war against Germany in the end. Thus, the Serbian-Austrian conflict in the Balkans turned into a Europe-wide war in just five weeks. ⁵¹ Stegemanns, page 366 ⁵² Grenfell, page 25 ⁴⁹ The extent of the German Imperial Government's scruples about violating Belgium's neutrality is expressed by Reich Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg before the Reichstag on August 4: "Thus we were forced to disregard the justified protest of the Luxembourg and Belgian Governments. The injustice - I speak openly of the injustice we are doing with this - we will try to make good as soon as our military objective has been achieved. Anyone who is as threatened as we are and is fighting for his utmost must think only of ⁵³ how he is getting through." ⁵³ The War Debt 1914 Germany did not pursue any war aims of its own in 1914. It did, however, contribute to the outbreak of war through Kaiser Wilhelm II's early and unconditional backing of Austria. But after this first ill-considered expression of loyalty to the alliance, the emperor and the government successively try to dissuade first the Russians, then the French, and finally the British from going to war with each other. Russia does not want to demobilize. France refuses to reciprocate with Germany, and England does not think of assuring peace to Germany for sparing Belgium. The German declaration of war on the Russians is the consequence of the futile attempt to force Russia to moderate. The declaration of war on France and the breach of Belgian neutrality are the almost inevitable consequences of the first step toward Russia. The reasons that Germany provides for the First World War lie deeper. They are the takeover of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, the economic and trade expansion, the fleet building program, the Baghdad Railway, and the German oil concessions in the country now called Iraq. Russia deliberately went to war in 1914. Domestic problems, the chance to gain the hoped-for access to the Mediterranean in case of victory and the assumed patronage over all Slavic peoples, tempt

the Russian government to openly support Serbia against Austria-Hungary, to mobilize and to invade Germany without warning or declaration of war. France's war aim since 1871 is to take back Alsace-Lorraine. It accomplishes diplomatically before the war what Germany omits from a lack of insight and fortune. France is looking for allies for a confrontation that will arise with the German Empire at some point in the future, as one assumes in Paris. France, as it is called, puts the allies to the battle. The French alliance policy had an inherent explosive power, which exploded in 1914. France pincers Germany with the French-Russian Dual Alliance in such a way that, when tensions and the threat of war with France or Russia arise, the German Reich is forced to make the first move militarily if it wants to escape the risk of its own demise with some chance of success. France's pincers and Germany's zugzwang could only be loosened in the event of a crisis like that of 1914 if France or Russia then declared that they did not want to take up arms. In the summer of 1914, however, neither France nor Russia wanted to keep the peace. Both have their "booty" firmly in mind. France's promise to the Russian government in 1912 to support it militarily in any case⁵⁴ and Poincare's visit to Petersburg on July 20, 1914, tempt the "war party" in Russia to play high poker with Germany at the end of July 14. France takes advantage of Russia's tough stance, which it itself encouraged, and seizes the opportunity presented by the German request for its own neutrality. It refuses to assure the German government of peace, continues to mobilize, and forces the Germans either to divest themselves of troops to defend Russia against France or to open war with France themselves as quickly as possible. Thus, in a true "masterstroke," France pins the blame for

opening the war on Germany. England does not directly push for war, but it believes it must defend its world market position, its colonial empire, and the naval supremacy that protects both against the German Empire's rise to power. The British government plays a double game designed to last for a long time and takes advantage of the opportunities that arise. London mediated in all the crises in Morocco and all the Balkan disputes, as it did in 1914, strengthening France's back against Germany. British foreign policy also included the promise of 1911 to support France with six army divisions against Germany if necessary and the assurance of August 2, 1914, that England's fleet would fight on France's side. These two secret assurances of brotherhood in arms in a possible war had the same disastrous effect as Kaiser Wilhelm II's "blank check" to Austria-Hungary. France gambles high and risks war over Alsace-Lorraine. When Germany is caught between Russia and France and asks England for neutrality and the continuation of peace, the British government refuses to agree to either. It refuses even when Germany offers to give up the march through Belgium. England waits instead until Germany makes an attempt to escape her own danger by attacking northern France with an approach through neutral Belgium. Then England's trap snaps shut. Britain 54 Grenfell, page 84 51 declares war on the German Empire for violating the neutrality of the Belgians. Thus, Britain is in a perfect position under international law, even though she deliberately helped to create the constellation for this outbreak of war by indirect means. Great Britain uses the chain reaction of the overlapping events in July 1914 to put an end to the German competition, the "Made in Germany" and the fleet building program in the German Reich. In 1914, America was still at a distance from the power play of the Europeans. The government, Congress and the people intend to keep their country out of this war overseas. But already at the beginning of the war, there are personalities of no small influence in the States who see things differently, for example Mahan and Roosevelt. Admiral Mahan has influenced the strategic thinking of many politically interested people in the U.S. for about 20 years,⁵⁵ and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who later leads his country into and through World War II

is at the time assistant secretary of the Navy. Mahan writes Roosevelt two weeks after the outbreak of war on August 13: "Germany's procedure is to overcome (her opponents) abruptly by concentrated preparation and impetuous driving force. Should the Germans defeat France and Russia on land, they would gain a breathing space that might enable them to build up a naval power comparable to England. In that event, the world would be confronted with a naval power...full of greedy and expansive ambition." ⁵⁶ So the bomb that would not go off against Germany until three years later was already ticking in some minds. None of the governments involved in 1914 overlooked in July 14 the magnitude of the European catastrophe to which they were contributing. None of the governments, apart from Belgium's, is making a serious effort to keep the peace. Great Britain and the German Reich tried several times to mediate between the contending parties. But the governments and representatives of both countries encourage the war-ready states of France and Austria-Hungary to irresponsibly risky actions by ill-considered promises and secret agreements. And France induces Russia to its unyielding attitude. Moreover, France and England consciously and approvingly accept the war because of the expected "windfall effects". Both are preparing themselves militarily at times to take advantage of the emerging German-Russian entanglements without themselves appearing as aggressors. Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Russia are heading directly and consciously for this war, even if Vienna initially thinks only of a punitive action against the Serbs. Thus the share of guilt of the states in the emergence of this ⁵⁵ Admiral Mahan writes in 1889 the book "The Influence of Sea Power upon History" ⁵⁶ Bavendamm, Roosevelts Weg zum Krieg, page 564 ⁵² First World War is highly different. In comparison, the burden of responsibility for the catastrophe of 1914 falls to the least extent on the account of the British and the Germans. The later British Prime Minister Lloyd George commented on the events of July 1914 with the words: "The nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war." ⁵⁷ Literally

translated: "The nations slithered into the boiling cauldron of war." The conglomeration of motives, wrongdoings, and guilt that lead to the outbreak of World War I is certainly seen through in postwar Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus it is inevitable that in the Reichstag in 1920 none of the parties from left to right accepts the dictum of "sole guilt" that the victors impose on the German people. In addition, the burden of reparations, which the victorious states justify with this "sole guilt" from 1919 on, interferes so deeply in the life and everyday life of all Germans that the revision of "sole guilt" and the Treaty of Versailles become the declared goal and consensus of all parties and political groupings in post-war Germany. Thus, it follows from the untenability of the theory of sole guilt that the European postwar order built on it soon collapses and leads to a new world war within only two decades. World War I lasts four years and in 1915/16 brings France to the limit of its ability to sustain it. The war also demands heavy sacrifices from the Central Powers. Thus, the governments in Berlin and Vienna use the conquest of Romania by German and Austro-Hungarian troops as what they consider a favorable opportunity to offer peace to the opposing powers, Russia, Great Britain and France, in December 1916. The offer is general and speaks of "peace and reconciliation". The opposing states took the offer as a sign that the Central Powers were weakening and responded with a demand for "atonement, reparation and guarantee. France and Russia also concluded a bilateral secret treaty, probably in order to hold each other accountable. In this pact, the two assured each other of their war profits. France was to receive Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar region, and Germany on the left bank of the Rhine was to be separated from the Reich and placed under French sovereignty as a buffer state. Russia receives 57 Lloyd George, page 32 58 Gebhardt, Vol. 4/1, page 78 53 in return the blank power "to fix her western frontiers in full liberty at her pleasure." It is to be allowed to take over all of Poland, Constantinople and the Dardanelles after a victory⁵⁹. Thus, the German peace offer of 1916 not only comes to nothing. It also aggravates the greed of the two opponents. Shortly thereafter, another attempt to broker peace for Europe fails. U.S. President Wilson asks the warring parties under what conditions the war could be ended. Great Britain and France set unacceptable conditions for Germany and Austria-Hungary, and Germany, after its just failed peace initiative, regrettably does not take Wilson's message any further. Instead of seizing the opportunity to use America's mediation, Germany risks involving the U.S. in its submarine warfare with Britain. As Britain cuts off Germany's raw material and food supplies by sea with a long-range blockade of its fleet, Germany also tries to cut off England from its supplies across the Atlantic. But this initially failed. Too many British merchant ships take the Union Jack off the mast before entering the disputed sea areas around England and continue unmolested to their ports under the American flag⁶⁰. Thus, the Supreme German Army Command places its last hope of eliminating England and ending the war victoriously on an unrestricted submarine war against all of England's supplies by sea. This submarine warfare brings England to a crisis, but at the same time it leads to a collision with the United States. The United States of America, although officially neutral, provides a large part of the transport fleet and imported goods for English supply. Thus, the "neutral" USA and its ships also become victims of the German naval warfare against England. The relationship of the USA to Germany gets a further damper at that time. When Russia left the war as a defeated country in 1917, the possibility of a victory of the Central Powers Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey was no longer completely excluded. This would have had consequences for the United States. England and France had their war costs financed entirely by American banks after using up their own public finances. In the event of a victory for Germany and Austria-Hungary, the war financing of England and France would have become lost credit and would have been to the detriment of the U.S. national economy. The prospect of thus becoming the financial loser of a foreign war, the unrestricted submarine warfare of the Germans, and a careless attempt by the Imperial government to offer support to Mexico, already at war with the U.S. ⁵⁹ Nitti, page 67 and French-Russian Treaty of March 11, 1917 ⁶⁰ Gaffney, page

174 54 ten⁶¹ , lead the American government to participate officially in the war on the side of Britain and France as well. On April 6, 1917, America declared war on the German Empire. The declaration of war on Austria-Hungary followed a few days later. Germany's and Austria-Hungary's forces dwindle. Those of the enemy increase constantly from now on due to the influx of fresh American troops. By October 1918, 30 U.S. divisions⁶² arrive in Europe and decide the war here. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey on their side no longer have a chance to turn the tide. In early 1918, with German troops still fighting undefeated in France, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson proposes a peace deal on harsh yet acceptable terms, the so-called "14 Wilson Points." The U.S. government consulted the British and French on this peace proposal, but did not commit them to it. Thus, the governments in London and Paris later did not feel bound by President Wilson's terms. The Mortgage of Propaganda

The peace negotiations that will now follow are under another mortgage besides the respective subjective views of the victors on the cause and occasion of this war. The governments and the media in England, France and the United States had conducted a public relations campaign to convince their voters and soldiers of the sense of the war, and to persuade them to persevere as the war becomes hard. The arguments used to "educate" the masses in France, Britain and America that they stand for right and good against wrong and evil are quite different in nature. The "enlightenment" of this kind begins in England, where the London TIMES, a good three weeks after the outbreak of war, reports in its August 27 issue, "that a man saw with his own eyes German soldiers chop off the arms of a baby clinging to its mother's skirt." On September 2, the TIMES comes back a second time with such news: "They cut off the hands of little boys so that France should have no more soldiers." ⁶¹ Binder, page 96 ⁶² Binder, page 100 55

Fig. 1: Propaganda image against German soldiers Since then, propaganda of the "bloodthirsty Hun" has flourished in the three countries mentioned. Nipple figurines with children stretching chopped off arms, postcards with German soldiers thrusting bayonets into babies' bodies, reports of nuns being raped, and the like set the British, French, and U.S. on edge against the German "Huns" and "Teutons." An investigation initiated by the Pope in the war zone, however, does not bring to light a single such case. Francesco Nitti, Prime Minister of Italy from 1919, describes in a book four years after the war how France, England and Italy put the most absurd stories into circulation in order to arouse the fighting spirit of their peoples. He writes: "One had to win, win at all costs...To win, one must hate above all, and to hate, one must impose on the enemy everything worth hating...At that time, the Germans were painted as barbarians of culture, as the root of all the evils of mankind. There was no cruelty that was not attributed to them, and if they did not shoot defenseless women, they chopped off the hands of children....First of all, the legend of the chopped-off children's hands has been cannibalized during the war ... as irrefutable proof of the German hun nature..... Not as if serious persons believed all these legends, but it was of use to spread them.Immediately after the war I wished to assure myself of the truth of all these accusations and commissioned several of my friends to make the necessary inquiries 56 by time, place and name. Lloyd George had the same thought and on his trip in Belgium interrogated all possible witnesses about the terrible amputations. But neither I nor he succeeded in establishing a single case as actual." ⁶³ The drumbeat against Germany does not stop even when German troops march out of France and Belgium in 1918 in preparation for a peace treaty. The British redundantly drop bombs on the French towns of Saint Quentin, Roulers, Douai, and Cambrai, spreading the word that the Germans are deliberately and systematically devastating previously occupied French territories as they withdraw⁶⁴. The Atlantic is no barrier to British propaganda against the Germans. The British extend their war with false information to the still neutral USA right after the outbreak of the war. The means of their fleet and the same language in England and the USA are particularly helpful to them. The Royal Navy cuts the German telecommunications cables at the bottom of the Atlantic and interrupts the exchange of messages

between Germany and America. Thus England can occupy the monopoly of the press and opinion in the USA, as far as the war of the Europeans is concerned. England floods the USA with its view of things and with its propaganda image of Germany. Sir Gilbert Parker, an English pressman, exposes this bluntly in HARPER'S MAGAZINE in March 1918. He writes "Practically with the outbreak of war I became responsible for British public relations in the United States....We distributed 360 English newspapers to U.S. magazine publishers. We made contacts with English soldiers, arranged interviews, and distributed our writing to a large number of public libraries, YMCA clubhouses, universities, colleges, clubs, and historical societies." 65 A Lord Northcliff besides runs a foundation named after him in the USA with 4,500 "publicity-agents." Thus, people in the U.S. and later American soldiers are influenced by an image of Germany that lingers into World War II. In 1917, when Woodrow Wilson was preparing the American population for the U.S. entry into the war, he too resorted to elevating the Germans to the status of the enemy of the world, the good and the righteous. He calls the German submarine warfare a "war against all nations" and makes it a "challenge to all mankind." Wilson calls on the world to "sweep away irresponsible and anti-democratic governments" and creates the beautiful slogan "The world must become safer for democracy ". 63 Nitti, pages 39 to 56 64 PAAA, Secret Files War 1914, R 21872, sheet 224 65 Gaffney, page 10 57 What the average American hearing this message does not know, however, and cannot know in 1917, is that democracy is not yet as developed in his own country as it was in the German Reich at that time. The democratic USA did not introduce universal, equal and secret suffrage until 1965 with the "Voting rights act". In the German Reich, which was so disparaged by Wilson, this had already existed since 1871. Wilson, too, resorted to the self-deception of painting his opponents black, portraying them as a danger to humanity and as evil powers. From then on, America demonizes its opponents in all wars. Media and entertainment films cover the U.S. with a propaganda image of "the German" that lasts in part until World War II. The film "The Prussian Cur," for example, shows a scene in which German soldiers crucify a captured Canadian at a courtyard gate. Such fantasies stick. The extent to which self-generated mirages are rampant in the U.S. can be seen in the minutes of the U.S. Congress meeting of January 10, 1918, which record the following prayer with which the congressmen begin the day: "The session will open at 11 o'clock. Rev. S. offers the following prayer: 'Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we thank Thee and rejoice that this government is founded on faith in Thee and Thy Word.... Thou knowest, O Lord, that we are in a life and death struggle with the most dishonorable, base, covetous, grudging, bloodthirsty, voluptuous and vicious nation that ever offended the book of history. You know that Germany has caused so many tears of humanity that a new sea is filling up with them. We pray to Thee that Thou mayest bare Thy mighty arm and throw back the horde of hungry, wolfish Huns from whose fangs fresh and clotted blood runs..... Bless our allies and may victory be ours....You be forever praised through Jesus Christ. Amen. " (The transcript of the debate follows).66 From this mountain of hatred and self-deception, the political elites of England, France, and America cannot come down when they are asked to make peace with the Germans in 1919. Thus, Versailles, Saint-Germain and Trianon are not only about a new peace order for Europe. According to the previous propaganda analogy, it is now also about revenge and punishment. 66 Congressional Record, Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the Second Session of the Sixty-Fifth Congress of the United States of America-Volume LV I Washington-Government printing Office 1918, Page 761, 762 58 The Treaty of Versailles and the Outlawing of Germany In early 1918, U.S. President

Woodrow Wilson provides the initial impetus for a peace settlement that all belligerents could accept. On January 8, he delivers the speech before Congress in which he develops a 14-point proposal for such a peace settlement⁶⁷. Nine of the fourteen points have significance for the German Reich. They are, 1. the abolition of secret diplomacy, 2. freedom of the seas, 3. future arms restrictions, 4. the settlement of

the collective claims of the Western Allied Powers, i.e. the Entente, 5. the evacuation of Russia by the Central Powers Germany and Austria-Hungary, 6. the restoration of Belgium, 7. the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, 8. the establishment of an independent Poland with free and safe access to the Baltic Sea, and 9. the establishment of a League of Nations. His proposal ends with the sentences, " We are not jealous of German greatness and there is nothing in this program to diminish it...We do not wish to injure Germany or in any way inhibit her legitimate influence or power..... We do not wish to fight Germany, either with arms or with hostile methods of trade, if she is willing to join us and the other peace-loving nations in treaties of justice, right and fairness. We desire only that Germany should occupy a place of equality among nations, rather than a place of supremacy. "68 In another speech to Congress on February 11, Wilson adds that there should be no territorial compensation and annexations against the will of the populations involved in a peace settlement. He expressly rules out arrangements "which in time will disturb the peace of Europe and thus of the world. "69 When the strategic situation of the German Reich deteriorated dramatically from August 1918 onward and became completely untenable in September, the Supreme Army Command urged the Reich government on September 19 and several times thereafter to enter into armistice negotiations with the enemy states. The Reich government and the army leadership are tempted by Wil 67 PAAA, Akten Krieg 1914, R 21923, sheets 12-14 68 Wilson Papers, pages 538 f 69 PAAA, R 21923, sheet 14 59 sons moderate 14 points to hope for acceptable peace terms. On October 3, the governments of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey send their cease-fire offers based on the 14 points to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, in whom they see the spokesman for their opposing powers. On October 10, the answer comes70. Wilson does not offer a truce at first. He asks back whether his 14 peace points have been accepted with this German offer. Wilson writes that he wants to propose an armistice to the allied governments, but that he demands that the German troops vacate the occupied Belgian and French territories beforehand.

Belgian and French territories beforehand. According to Wilson, this would be the prerequisite for a subsequent "good relationship of confidence". According to this Wilson answer, the German government can assume that the 14 points will become the basis of a peace agreement. It can also hope for a "good relationship of confidence" upon withdrawal of all troops from the occupied territories. Nevertheless, an armistice is not yet assured by the other side. The Imperial Government trusts Wilson's offer and the conditions, withdraws its troops from France and from Belgium, and begins to disband them at home. In its reply note, the German Imperial Government invokes Wilson's 14 points once again and expresses the hope that, in addition to the United States, the other enemy states will also abide by them71. In the fourteen days until November, Wilson repeatedly makes new demands in two letters, which the Reich government accepts each time with a note72. In his letter of October 23, for example, Wilson sets the condition that the U.S. and its allies will negotiate a peace treaty with Germany only if elected representatives of the people and not "military rulers and monarchical autocrats" are sent from the German side for this purpose73. If Germany did not send elected representatives, so the condition, it could not be negotiated. Then Germany would have to surrender. The Reich government pledges the elected representatives and sends them to Versailles in 1919. Nevertheless, the peace is not negotiated. It is dictated, as will be described later, and the defeated German Reich has to surrender in spite of having complied with the conditions. In the following weeks of October, the army command and the government learn from many press and agent reports how far the views of the British, Americans, and French diverge on an armistice and peace. The British and French still want to conquer Belgium at first, but 70 U.S. government note of October 8, 1918: PAAA Secret Files War 1914, R 21872, sheets 35 and 36 71 PAAA, R 21872, sheets 164 and 165, note of October 12, 1918 72 Notes of October 14, 20, 23, and 27, 1918 See Treaty Ploetz, pages 32-35 73 Treaty Ploetz, page 34 60 the Belgians and Americans balk. The French are eager to march into Alsace and Lorraine as victors, so as not to get both parts of the

country in the course of a peace settlement thanks to Allied arms aid. The English and Americans prevent this. The French also want to use the self-disarmament of the German troops to occupy Germany with their troops⁷⁴. In the USA are besides on 5 October still elections to the congress. Wilson's opponents reject his conduct of negotiations with the Germans and want to annul the 14 points in the event of an election victory. In order to reassure the Germans and continue to persuade them to make peace, Wilson followed up with the following declaration on November 5, 1918: "The Allied Governments ... declare their readiness to conclude peace with the German government on the basis of the terms of peace set forth in the President's address to Congress of January 8, 1918."⁷⁵ Thus Wilson pretended that the governments of England and France had also accepted his 14 points. Thus, on November 5, 1918, four days before the official armistice negotiations began, Wilson expressis verbis pledges that the Allies intend to make peace on the basis of the 14 Points. In terms of international law, this is tantamount to a preliminary peace treaty, which now has to be formalized in a final treaty. On November 9, 1918, the armistice negotiations begin in the forest of Compiègne northeast of Paris. The negotiator on the Entente side is now the Frenchman Marshal Foch and no longer the American Wilson. In the meantime, the Austrians, the Hungarians, the Turks and the Bulgarians have also entered into an armistice with the victors, and the revolution begins in Berlin. Thus, the negotiating position of the Germans has become conceivably bad. The delegates of the Entente do not adhere to Wilson's 14 points and add new demands. The German delegation cannot now threaten to resume fighting. Thus it is left only to accept the extended demands of the opponents for a truce of 36 days. The most important of the demands are: 1. the evacuation of the occupied territories within 15 days, 2. the evacuation of Germany west of the Rhine with additional bridgeheads on the east bank at Mainz, Coblenz, and Cologne, 3. the unilateral release of prisoners of war, 4. The annulment of the previous peace agreements with the defeated states of Russia and Romania, ⁷⁴ PAAA, Secret Files War 1914, R 21882 ⁷⁵ PAAA, Secret Files War 1914, R 21882, sheet 185 61 5. The delivery of large quantities of railroad trains, trucks, and war material, and 6. The internment of the German High Seas Fleet in the sea area off Scapa Flow north of Scotland.⁷⁶ In accepting these terms on November 11, 1918, Germany surrendered its arms and leverage. Thus, it is no longer capable of negotiating in the peace negotiations that are now pending. It is at the mercy of the victors and can no longer invoke Wilson's 14-point peace offer. The limitation of the armistice to only 36 days also means that the victors can make new demands at each extension of the truce. On January 18, 1919, the so-called Versailles Peace Conference begins near Paris. Here, the foreign ministers of the 27 victorious states alone deliberate. French Prime Minister Clemenceau presides over the meeting. Germany's "elected representatives" are not admitted to the talks, despite the Wilson letter of October 23. The basis of the Versailles consultations was not Wilson's 14 points, as initially assumed by the Germans. The victors negotiate among themselves solely about their war aims, i.e. about the distribution of their booty. Germany must bleed heavily in the process. Germany was spared greater sacrifices than those demanded in the Versailles Treaty only because England knew how to prevent France from gaining too much power and because U.S. President Wilson put the brakes on the greed of the other victors. In April 1919, the Versailles victors' conference even threatened to fail because of this. Marshal Foch demands the establishment of a Rhine state separated from Germany. He demands that the victors permanently occupy this state with an international army, to which the USA should contribute a contingent of 100,000 soldiers⁷⁷. Wilson takes the flood of demands from Paris too far, he leaves the conference, travels back to the U.S., and Congress refuses to sign the Versailles Treaty. Germany was also spared other demands by the objection of England and the USA. The Poles and the Czechs demanded more German land than they finally got. France offers Holland the Emsland, but the Dutch, who did not participate in the war, remain fair and refuse. Even a sovereign country from the victorious camp almost gets into the spoils. Negotiations are underway to

determine whether Luxembourg will be annexed by France or Belgium⁷⁸. On May 7, the terms set by the 27 victors are opened to the German delegation for the first time. The Frenchman Clemenceau presents them with 76 Treaty of Versailles, pages

36 f 77 Nevis, page 435 78 Nevis, page 368 62 the words, "The hour of reckoning is here."

"Settlement" instead of "just and fair treaties," as Wilson had proclaimed it exactly five months earlier, in order to induce the German Empire to accept an armistice. The request of the German delegates to negotiate beforehand the "treaty" they are now to sign is refused. With several written notes, the Germans achieve only one or two improvements in Germany's favor. The fact that the Treaty of Versailles was dictated and not negotiated will remain its great stain. Compared with the European peace treaties of the 19th century, the dictate turns out to be unusually harsh. To give the magnitude of their demands the appearance of justification, the victors stoop to attributing sole blame for World War I to Germany and its wartime allies. The treaty demands a large number of land and population cessions from Germany: Alsace-Lorraine to France, the provinces of Posen and almost all of West Prussia as well as the Upper Silesian industrial area to Poland, the Memelland to the League of Nations, the Hultschiner Ländchen to Czechoslovakia, North Schleswig to Denmark, the area around the two cities of Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium, and Danzig with its surrounding area as a free state under the sovereignty of the League of Nations. The treaty places the Saar region under French rule for 15 years and transfers the mines there to French ownership. It prohibits the annexation of the rest of Austria to the German Reich. It establishes occupation zones on German territory on the left bank of the Rhine, in which Belgian and French troops are to be stationed in three zones for 5, 10 and 15 years respectively. With the treaty, Germany loses its colonies mainly to England and the British Dominions, but also to France, Belgium and Japan. The treaty takes away Germany's sovereignty over its inland waterways and air sovereignty in its own country. The armed forces are reduced to 100,000 men in the army and 15,000 in the navy. Air force, submarines and heavy artillery are forbidden to Germany in the future, and a zone of

banned, and a zone 50 kilometers wide on the right bank of the Rhine is closed to German military. The German Reich must hand over to the victors most of its merchant fleet and gold reserves, along with a large part of its annual ore and coal claims, lime, cement and gasoline production, vast quantities of livestock and agricultural machinery, 150,000 railroad cars and many thousands of locomotives and trucks. All German private foreign assets and countless industrial patents were confiscated. The amount of money to be paid, as reserved by the victors in the treaty, will be determined later. The German Reich was dismayed and deeply disappointed. After all, the "victors" had not achieved victory before the armistice, even if they were close to it. All the warring countries except America were 63 Map 2: German Land Losses after World War I worn out and desperately needed this peace. War losses to the enemy were, after all, one-third higher than their own. German troops were still in France and not a single French or British had advanced into Germany. Only Germany had made advance contributions to the peace agreement since the armistice, had withdrawn troops and had begun to disband them. In his 14-point speech, Wilson had spoken of "German greatness," of "treaties of justice, right and fairness." Thus the Germans had been able to count on open negotiations and a decent peace, all the more so since the American president had assured them of a peace based on his 14 points just four days before the armistice. In Germany in 1919, it is still too well known how the French themselves were dealt with in the peace treaty of Frankfurt in 1871. France, which had caused and lost the war of 1870, then had to cede the predominantly German-speaking Alsace-Lorraine and pay five billion francs in silver money within three years. After that, the German occupation troops left. France kept its army, its fleet, its colonies and its gold reserves. A small example shows how stark the difference is between the two peace treaties of 1871 and 1919. In Article 2 of the 64 Peace of Frankfurt, the Germans stipulate the guarantee

of possession for the French Alsatians. With Article 74 of the Peace of Versailles, the French regulate the expropriation of the German Alsatians. In memory of the peace that the Germans had concluded with the French in 1871, in 1919 the now defeated Germany was appalled by the excessiveness of the demands. The parties in the Reichstag therefore initially unanimously rejected the dictate. On the day after the peace terms were delivered, Reich President Ebert (SPD) said: "The sincere will for peace of our people, who had been hard to tolerate, found its first response in immensely harsh armistice terms. The German people laid down their arms and honestly kept all the obligations of the armistice, hard as they were. Nevertheless, our opponents continued the war for six months by maintaining the hunger blockade. The German people bore all the burdens in the confidence of the promise given by the Allies in the note of November 5 that peace would be a peace of law based on Wilson's 14 points. What we are now being offered instead in the peace terms contradicts the promise given, is unbearable for the German people, and unfulfillable even with the exertion of all forces. Violence without measure or limits is to be inflicted on the German people. From such an imposed peace would have to grow new hatred between the 79 peoples and in the course of history new murder....." 79 But the power of the victors forces to sign. England threatens to resume the blockade of German ports for the import of food and raw materials to Deutschland and to Austria-Hungary if she refuses to sign the treaty. Despite the armistice concluded in November 1918, England had maintained its wartime naval blockade until mid-May 1919, thus permanently breaking the armistice by then. The British government had also refused the German Imperial Government's request to exempt at least wheat, fats, condensed milk and medicines from the embargo during the armistice⁸⁰. As a result, Germany and the rest of Austria already suffered nearly one million deaths from starvation by March 1919. Neither state can risk a resumption of the naval blockade by the British just two months later in view of the famine in the country. In addition, France threatens to occupy the now largely demilitarized Germany with troops. In this hopeless situation, the German delegation at Versailles signed the treaty under duress on June 28, 1919. A mantle note to the treaty initially presents the view of the victors. It reads, "In the opinion of the Allied and Associated Powers, the war which broke out on August 1, 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity and against the freedom of peoples which a nation pretending to be civilized has ever consciously committed. During long years the rulers of Germany, true to the Prussian tradition, have sought supremacy in Europe..... The conduct of Germany is almost unprecedented in the history of mankind. The terrible responsibility which rests upon it can be summed up in the fact that at least seven million dead lie buried in Europe, ... That is why the Allied and Associated Powers have emphatically declared that Germany, as a fundamental condition of the treaty, must perform a work of reparation to the utmost limit of her capacity." ⁸¹ With this mantra, the "Allied and Associated Powers" expel the Germans from the community of civilized peoples. This will have consequences. The Versailles Treaty, in addition to all its ruthlessness, contains four particular articles that will prove to be boomerangs for the victorious states. First, there is the preamble. It begins with the sentence: "The United States of America, the British Empire ... (the list of the other victorious powers follows) on the one hand, and Germany on the other ... Have agreed upon the following provisions: ..." This "agreed" is based on the pure compulsion of the stronger. The defeated Germany has not "agreed" here, even if she now has to sign it. The false word at the beginning of the treaty is intended to conceal the fact that this is a completely unilateral declaration of the will of the victors. Such a thing was no longer customary or practiced in the great peace treaties after the Napoleonic wars and, as already mentioned, after the war of 1870-71. It represents a throwback to the times when only the self-interest of the stronger and not the balance between the quarreling parties was the norm of peace agreements. When Adolf Hitler does the same to the then defeated 20 years later, it is accepted in Germany as a "paying home in equal coin" without much qualms. Second, Article 8 of the Treaty of Versailles stipulates that all signatories,

including the victors, must "reduce their armies to a minimum. Article 8 also stipulates that the German Reich must be the first to disarm, and that this is a prerequisite for the reduction of the fleets and armies of the other states. As the victors could have imagined, Article 8 would later become a boomerang, hitting the Germans first, but eventually themselves. After Germany disarmed in 1927, the victorious powers refused to fulfill their obligations and to dismantle their fleets and armies. There is general indignation about this in Germany. The German imperial governments then initially demand that the victors follow suit with troop reductions. When 81 Treaty of Versailles 66 this fails to bear fruit, they demand the right for Germany to rearm to a reasonable extent and to bring the small Reichswehr somewhat into line with the size of the armies of the victors by this means. But before Hitler's election as chancellor, this could not be achieved by negotiation.

When Hitler rebuilt the Wehrmacht in 1933, first with caution and then with vehemence, it initially fit only too well into the framework of what the victors were affording themselves. Until 1937, therefore, there were hardly any reasons in Germany to suspect that Hitler's arms buildup was intended to lead to war in the near future. Article 8 of the Treaty of Versailles catches up with the victors under Hitler. Third, Section 5 from Part III of the treaty will have consequences. This part of the treaty stipulates that Germany must surrender Alsace and Lorraine to France. It is not the territory that is at stake here, but the principle of "pacta sunt servanda" that is broken (treaties are to be kept). The Peace of Frankfurt, which ended the Franco-Prussian War in 1872, stipulated that both parts of the country would henceforth belong to the German Empire forever. This eternity does not even last a full 50 years. Here, the Entente states show that treaties only last as long as the stronger party adheres to them. This, too, had an influence on the public's and the military's sense of justice in Germany. When Hitler himself unscrupulously breaks treaties almost two decades later and announces this unabashedly, Germany is no longer particularly shocked. It is taken as a brutalization of international customs for which one is not responsible.

for which one is not responsible. Fourth, Article 231 will have consequences for the Entente states. The victorious powers justify their exorbitant reparation demands in the treaty with the sole guilt of Germany and its allies in the war. Article 231 states: "... that Germany and her allies are responsible as authors for all losses and all damages suffered by the Allied and Associated Governments and their dependents as a result of the war forced upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies." In Germany, however, Kaiser Wilhelm II's attempts in July 1914 to maintain peace through mediation and negotiation have not been forgotten. One also remembers the mobilizations in Russia and in France which first forced Germany to act, the refusal of the Russians to call off the mobilization of their troops, and the failure of the British and French to assure neutrality and peace to their German neighbors. The assertion of the sole guilt of the Germans and their allies is so brazen that the indignation at the mendacity of the victors and the consternation out of a deeply wounded sense of honor in Germany find no bounds. The reactions are correspondingly. Reich Justice Minister Otto Landsberg (SPD), one of the German delegates at Versailles says what many in defeated Germany are thinking: 67 "This peace is a slow murder of the German people." The verdict is often no different even abroad. Secretary of State Lansing from the U.S. delegation to Versailles comments on the treaty in a memo dated May 8, 1919, as follows: "The impression made by the peace treaty is disappointing. Arouses regret and dejection. The peace terms seem unspeakably harsh and humiliating, while many of them seem to me unfulfillable. It may be years before these oppressed peoples are able to throw off their yoke, but as surely as night follows day, the time will come when they will dare to try. We have a peace treaty, but it will not bring lasting peace because it is founded on the quicksand of self-interest." 82 William Bullitt, a diplomat and member of the American delegation at Versailles, wrote to his president asking to be recalled from the conference. His letter of May 17, 1919, states, "The unjust decisions of the Versailles Conference on

Shantung, Tyrol, Thrace, Hungary, East Prussia, Danzig, the Saarland, and the abandonment of the principle of freedom of the seas make new conflicts certain.... Therefore, I consider it my duty to advise my own government and people neither to sign nor ratify this unjust treaty." 83 The United States of North America consistently refused to sign the dictate and concluded its own peace treaty with Germany in 1921. In a memorandum dated March 26, 1919, even before the treaty is handed to the Germans, British Prime Minister Lloyd George notes, "Injustice and insolence, played out in the hour of triumph, will never be forgiven nor forgotten. For this reason I am most strongly opposed to depriving more Germans than is indispensably necessary of German rule in order to place them under the control of another nation. I can hardly see a stronger cause for a future war, ...". The British signed the treaty despite this early insight. Their sense of spoils and consideration for their partner France are obviously stronger than their own voice of reason. But even late insight does not lead the British governments to repair the damage of Versailles themselves in the period up to 1933. The British national economist Keynes, advisor to the British delegation at Versailles, evaluated the treaty as early as 1920 in his book "The Economic Consequences of the Peace Treaty" as 82 Baumfalk, page 121 83 Bernhardt, page 40 68 "an attempt to consign Germany to enslavement and as a tissue of Jesuit interpretations to cover up intentions of robbery and oppression. " Later British Prime Minister Winston Churchill also expressed his views on Versailles in his memoirs: "The economic provisions of the treaty were so vicious and foolish that they obviously lost all effect. Germany was condemned to pay nonsensically high reparations. The victorious Allies still assure that they will squeeze Germany until the 'pips crack.' All this exerted a tremendous influence on world events and 84 on the mood of the German people." 84 Francesco Nitti, the Italian Prime Minister at the time of the end of the Versailles victors' conference remarks: "Never has a serious and lasting peace been founded on the plunder, torment and ruin of a defeated, let alone a defeated great people. And this and nothing else 85 is the Treaty of Versailles." 85 Otherwise, Nitti repeatedly refers to the treaty, which he did not himself help negotiate, as a crime against the Germans in a 1923 book. In France, it is the Socialists who disapprove of the sharpness of the treaty. When the Treaty of Versailles was debated in the National Assembly on September 18, 1919, the deputy Jean Longuet said on behalf of the Socialist faction: "This treaty can in no way receive the approval of the Socialist Party. It emerges from what is probably the most scandalous abuse of secret diplomacy. It openly violates the right of self-determination of peoples, subjugates whole nations, and creates new dangers of war." 86 It must be astonishing that the victors should nevertheless frame the treaty in this way, despite so much insight. The Versailles Treaty is so obviously based on untruth and injustice that it provides the National Socialists with a permanent election campaign theme from 1928. This will later cost the victors blood and tears. It should be added that Wilson's speeches were also published in German after the First World War. It is interesting to note that the sentences with heavy content from the meaningful 14-point speech are omitted there: "We do not wish to injure Germany or in any way inhibit her rightful influence or power. We do not wish to fight Germany, either with arms or with hostile methods of trade, if she is willing to join us and the other peace-loving 84 Churchill World War, pages 13f 85 Nitti, page 14 86 Rassinier, page 206 69 nations in treaties of justice, right and fairness. We wish only that Germany should occupy a place of equality among nations, rather than a place of supremacy." 87 These sentences are later omitted from other German-language publications as well. 88 This somewhat obscures for German readers after World War I the magnitude of the deception inherent in the Treaty of Versailles. The First Consequences of Versailles The burdens imposed on the Germans by the Treaty of Versailles are so extraordinary, and the subsequent concessions made by the victors are so slight, that it is for these –among other reasons– that the young democracy in Germany fails. The compulsory levies on machinery, foodstuffs, coal, fertilizers and foreign exchange lead to the impoverishment of broad strata of the population and affect them so directly that every party and every

politician who promises a solution or relief can count on a bonus of hope and electoral success. The NSDAP will profit from this. The population in the Ruhr area, for example, which lives on coal, has to freeze in winter times. The coal, as soon as it is mined, is immediately transported to France. The reparations also lead to anger and resentment among the victors. The German Reich does not only have to deliver large contributions in kind as reparations. It must pay gold and foreign exchange in an amount that the Reich cannot raise. Since Germany's national economy is badly hit by the cessions of territory, by the loss of 75 percent of its iron ore deposits, by the severance of the coal and industrial districts in Upper Silesia and on the Saar, and by the delivery of machinery, locomotives, motor vehicles, and merchant ships, the foreign exchange needed for reconstruction can be raised only in foreign trade and by dumping offers on the world market. To do this, German companies have to underbid operations in England and France, which leads to distortions and further anger toward Germany there. Furthermore, it is believed abroad that the Germans are deliberately keeping their economy in disarray to prove their inability to pay.⁸⁹ The amount of the monetary payments is not determined until 1921. On March 3, at a conference in London, the victors initially demand from Germany 269 billion gold marks in 42 annual installments to be paid annually until 1963. The demand ⁸⁷ Wilsons-Dokumente, III. vol., page 42 ⁸⁸ e.g. in ODSUN-Dokumente, page 480 ⁸⁹ Taylor, page 62 ⁷⁰ is to be accepted

in a period of only four days. But this immense sum of money is already worth 3 trillion paper marks in view of currency collapse at home and can no longer be paid off. The German government responds to the London ultimatum with a counterproposal, which the victors consider completely inadequate. On March 8, 1921, despite the "peace" of Versailles, they occupied the cities of Duisburg, Düsseldorf and Ruhrort and threatened to resume the hunger blockade of 1919 and also to occupy the Ruhr with troops. Thus the Reich government has to accept. In the meantime, the Reparations Commission of the victors has set the total amount of claims for

money to 132 billion gold marks plus 26% of German export earnings⁹⁰. To all this must be added the not inconsiderable maintenance costs for 140,000 occupation troops⁹¹. England and the USA try to moderate the French claims, but France hopes to be able to occupy Germany permanently on the left bank of the Rhine and keep it under its own sovereignty if it can no longer pay⁹². From May 1921, the press in France promoted the idea of taking over the Ruhr with French engineers and military⁹³. After the enormous government expenditures for the war had put a great strain on the value of money anyway, now the outflow of foreign exchange without economic countervalue finally destroys German money. From January 1923, inflation reigns in Germany. The country can no longer pay its reparations in money, and coal deliveries to France also fall into arrears. Then France's Prime Minister Poincaré orders the occupation of the Ruhr region with troops from January 11, 1923, and the seizure of all mining production for France. Belgium participates in the Ruhr occupation with troops. The German deliveries in 1922 include wood and coal worth 24 million gold marks. The deliveries and payments made in the same year, however, amount to 1,478 billion gold marks⁹⁴. Thus, the reason advanced by the French as a pretext for the "cold conquest" of the Ruhr is a shortfall of only 1.6% of the annual installment due. The Reich government is outraged that the French are marching troops into Reich territory despite the peace concluded at Versailles. It calls on the population to offer "passive resistance." The unions respond with a general strike and the miners in many cities refuse to surrender their mines to the French. In Essen, French soldiers shoot fourteen workers who try to resist the seizures. Hundreds of German men who oppose the French are ⁹⁰ Gebhardt, Vol. 4/1, Page 228 ⁹¹ Kern, Page 71 ⁹² Taylor, Page 39 ⁹³ Nitti, Page 71 ⁹⁴ Gebhardt, Vol. 4/1, Page 239 ⁷¹ deported to France and the colonies. 80,000 Germans are expelled and forced to leave the Ruhr on French orders⁹⁵. In Germany, bitterness rises. In France, indignation grows over the "defeated" Germans, who first signed the Treaty of Versailles and now have not honored it. In November 1923, inflation ends in the German Reich. One

trillion paper marks have now become Rentenmarks. Since France is now almost as exhausted as Germany and needs orderly finances, the so-called Dawes Plan is agreed in 1924 through American mediation. According to this plan, Germany must pay 1 to 1.7 billion marks in reparations annually, and from 1928 onwards, 2.5 billion annually, initially for an unlimited period. After 1928, the plan would then be renegotiated. Germany initially pays for four years, but largely with money from foreign loans taken out with private banks in the United States. In return, the French and Belgians vacate the occupied Ruhr region in 1925. In 1929, after another conference, the so-called Young Plan stipulated that reparations for World War I would amount to about 2 billion marks a year until 1988. In addition, as a hidden reparation, there is a transportation tax on the German Reichsbahn of another three quarters of a billion marks per year until 1966, to be paid to the victorious powers⁹⁶. After the Reich government assured the payment of this money, the occupation troops were also withdrawn from the Rhineland, four years ahead of the time stipulated in Versailles. On October 24, 1929, "Black Friday," stock market prices first crash on Wall Street in New York, followed by a severe economic crisis. As a result, U.S. banks demanded repayment of the short-term loans with which Germany had had to pay its reparations. The German banking and credit system was able to withstand the withdrawal of foreign currency only until mid-1931. There were now no more loans available for industry and small and medium-sized businesses in Germany. The number of insolvencies and company collapses in 1930 and 1931 increased in leaps and bounds, and with it the number of people out of work. At the turn of the year 1931-32, the number of unemployed exceeded 6 million people. At the request of Reich President von Hindenburg and through the mediation of U.S. President Hoover, German reparations payments are suspended for a year. In 1932, the victorious powers formally end the reparations problem at a conference in Lausanne. The remaining reparations can now be paid off by a one-time payment of 3 billion Reichsmarks. But this does not cover the total debt from the reparations previously pumped into America, which had grown in the meantime, and it is not settled. Germany is 95 Binder, page 132 96 Bernhardt, page 67 72 initially unable to pay the 3 billion as the "final installment" plus the foreign bonds in the United States plus the interest. From then on, the German Reich negotiates annually with the Bank for International Settlements to defer the obligations. In 1953, after the Second World War, the thread of reparations for the First World War is resumed. The repayment of the remaining debt is reorganized in the so-called London Debt Agreement, insofar as West Germany has to pay for it proportionately. After the reunification of the two post-war German states in 1990, the remainder is settled. The reunited Germany now pays the GDR's share in arrears. Thus, the Federal Republic had to commit itself to pay the remaining debt from the reparations for the First World War and the interest for it in installments until the year 2010⁹⁷. Today, in post-2000 Germany, such payments for World War I are no longer a special issue, not even in their symbolic significance. But in 1920 "Versailles" is of a tremendous explosive power, destroying the young republic of Weimar from within. The plundering of defeated Germany decided at Versailles, the expulsion and unemployment of millions of people and the hardship that ensues lead to the radicalization of broad masses after ten hopeless years. The sad result is the end of democracy in Germany in 1933, which the victors had not wanted to give a chance before. The subjective view of the peoples The treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain, Trianon and the other Paris suburban treaties transform Europe and America into a world of mostly discontented nations. There is indignation in France over Germany's refusal to fulfill the signed treaty. There is a fear of losing its new supremacy on the continent again "in a next round." Thus, the French are trying to turn the state of emergency of German defeat into a permanent state. They refuse to disarm themselves and again encircle Germany with a series of military treaties. In England, they cash in on the land gains of Versailles and are from now on more inclined to keep France in check as the continent's new "first" power. Thus, England's attitude toward Germany in the first years after the war is initially wait-and-see

friendly. But the British helped keep Germany busy and small at Versailles through a variety of conflict foci on almost all of its borders. All these hearths, such as the 97 BM Finances November 27, 1996 73 Saarland, the Rhineland denuded by German military, Eupen, Malmedy, Danzig, Memel, West Prussia and Upper Silesia come back on the agenda a few years after Versailles to the chagrin of the British. Each time these herds present London with the choice of denying the right of self-determination of peoples or yielding to defeated Germany after all. Since the British governments do not solve any of the problems on their own, the Germans and especially Hitler are left with a rich field for future success. The system of the postwar order, which the British had helped to screw up, broke down in 1939 when they failed to tackle and solve the problem of Danzig itself in time. In the United States of North America, the First World War had been well earned by supplying arms and munitions to England and France, by making war loans to both countries, and by lending money for German reparations. Nevertheless, people were greatly disappointed by the outcome of this peace. President Wilson had justified U.S. entry into the war on the grounds that it would make the world a safer place. In the last year of the war, Wilson had called for a peace conference at which victors and vanquished would negotiate as equals. And he had proposed a forum of all peoples to preserve a more just world under equal rights for all, the League of Nations. The victors' conference at Versailles and the dictate as its outcome so contradict Wilson's earlier visions that the United States does not sign the Versailles Treaty. And the League of Nations is so cavalierly used by France and Britain to cement Germany's momentary inferiority that the U.S. refuses to join it after its founding. Woodrow Wilson's disappointment with his previous allies and with this "peace" is so strong that shortly after Versailles he decides and orders that the U.S. navy be vigorously rearmed. Wilson does not trust the peace. The Polish elite is also dissatisfied with the results of the Versailles negotiations. The Polish delegation had requested from the victors claimed additional territories in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and the German Reich for themselves and did not receive them at the time. Thus, the Poles helped themselves, conquering and annexing territories beyond their allotted borders in Lithuania, Russia, Germany, and Czechoslovakia between 1920 and 1938. Another result of the Paris Preliminary Treaties is the emergence of three new multiethnic states in Europe. In Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, the Poles, Serbs, and Czechs celebrate their new freedom and right to national self-determination. But in their search for national identity and unity, the three titular nations mentioned above strive to impose their language, customs and nature on the other parts of the people within their new states. Thus begin hard times for the new minorities of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Austrians, Hungarians, Albanians, Macedonians, 74 Montenegrins, Croats, Slovenes, Ruthenians and Slovaks. The aspirations for independence of the many minorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland form the easily ignited underground on which these two multi-ethnic states burn to the ground in 1939. Postwar Austria and postwar Hungary, now both independent of each other, are but remnants of their old prewar size. Both peoples are forced to cede large parts of their lands, and with them millions of their guarantors, to the new neighboring states. This, the post-war hardship and the accusation of sole guilt in the past war are so similar to Germany's problems and situation that both states again become the natural allies of the German Reich for the future. Map 3: Breakup of the Danube Monarchy Postwar Germany is so strangled by reparations in money, in kind and in kind that the hardship is clearly felt by everyone in the country. In addition, there are the losses of territories and people. The removal of 7 million people from the German Reich and the borders of new states separate millions of families indefinitely. Distress, separation and expulsion are psychologically crowned with the accusation of war guilt. Four years after 1914, the population still remembers too well how, shortly before the outbreak of war, the Kaiser and the government tried to dissuade Russia and France from going to war. Thus Article 231, which places the sole blame on Germany and the allies, is seen by the mass of all Germans as a political expedient lie to justify the

exorbitant reparations. Another thing is having an effect. The invasions and attacks of troops from France, Belgium, England, Lithuania and Poland in the 1920s, against which the German Reich with only 100,000 of its own soldiers is as good as helpless, show everyone that Germany must be rearmed for its own protection. Since the Versailles Treaty is an outright breach of Wilson's five notes and peace offers, it is regarded by politicians and the military as nothing more than a gigantic fraud that owes no compliance, not even that Germany will remain permanently defenseless. One concludes from what one has experienced that one can expect neither good nor fairness from foreign countries in the future. So the mood remains until the next war begins. The territorial losses initially played only a secondary role in the political discussion of the postwar years. In Germany, almost no one wants a new war because of this. But the parties in the Reich from the far left to the far right and the population strive for a general revision of the Treaty of Versailles. When the victorious powers make virtually no substantial concessions to the German Reich and thus to the democratic forces of the young republic on this issue for ten years, the population's confidence in the democrats' ability to act declines. It is the radical workers' parties that take advantage of this, the Communist Party and the National Socialist Workers' Party. Both advertise with the promise of breaking the treaty. In the central organ of the KPD, "DIE ROTE FAHNE," on August 24, 1930, the following can be read as a program: "We solemnly declare that, in the event of our seizing power, we will declare all obligations resulting from the Versailles Peace null and void." Thus, the number of mandates of the two left-wing radical parties increases by leaps and bounds as of the Reichstag elections of 1930. The mandates of the bourgeois parties and those of the Social Democrats decrease accordingly. The Treaty of Versailles poisons the political culture in Germany; it shatters the international customs of dealing with the defeated that had slowly become civilized in the previous century. It creates reasons for many new wars all over Europe. Burning smell in Europe Since Versailles, Saint-Germain and Trianon, there is a smell of a new war in Europe. The victors have punished the vanquished without later offering peace in the sense of compensation and reconciliation. They helped themselves above all, elevated the power of the strongest to the sole regulative, in many cases abrogated the 76 self-proclaimed right of self-determination of the peoples, and in the process brought more new minority problems into the world than cleared away old ones. Moreover, the majority of the victors did not keep their word to disarm themselves later. Thus the treaties create facts and a climate in which many wise Europeans and others give peace no chance. This is reflected in many comments from the first post-war years. Friedrich Ebert in 1919: "From such imposed peace would have to ... become new murder." U.S. Secretary of State Lansing in 1919: "We have a peace treaty, but it will not bring lasting peace." British Prime Minister Lloyd George in 1919: "I can hardly see a stronger cause for future war." Dutch envoy Swinderen to a British colleague: "The Versailles peace terms contain all the seeds of a just and lasting war." English MP Kneeshaw to the 1920 Labour Party Conference: "If we were the defeated people and had such conditions imposed upon us, we ... begun in our schools and homes to prepare our children for a war of retaliation." Italian Prime Minister Nitti in 1923: "Never has a serious and lasting peace been founded on the plunder, torment and ruin of a defeated ... People has been founded." British general and historian Fuller in his book, 1939-1945: "Thus were sown the dragon's teeth from which was to emerge a conflict even more disastrous than that which these treaty violations ended." By treaty violation, Fuller refers to the unredeemed 14 Wilson points. Even French Marshal Foch, who had led the Allied armistice delegation at Compiegne only a short time before, prophesied, "This is not peace. This is an armistice for 20 years." For the next 20 years, there was indeed an armistice, but it only feigned a new peace order. In reality, there is ferment and rumbling in Europe. The Communist International, KOMINTERN, announces at a conference on January 10, 1933, three weeks before Adolf Hitler becomes German chancellor, what the next years will be about: "The Communist International welcomes the struggle of the CP of Poland for the right of

free self-determination of the population of Upper Silesia and the Polish corridor until it breaks away from Poland, and for the right of the population of Danzig to join Germany voluntarily. It welcomes the struggle of the CP of France for the right of self-determination of the people of Alsace-Lorraine until their separation from France, and for the liberation of the Saar region from imperialist occupation. It welcomes the struggle of the CP of Belgium for the right of self-determination of the Flemish people and of the people of Eupen-Mal-98 medy until their separation from Belgium." 98 98 Kern, page 83 78

PART 2 THE YEARS OF THE CONNECTIONS The Years of the Connections The Referendum on the Saar The German Military Sovereignty in the Rhineland The Connection of Austria The Prehistory The German-Austrian Rapprochement Postwar Austria Dr. Schuschnigg's "Referendum" The Reunification Stresa, Abyssinia and the Rome-Rome axis Berlin America in the background The annexation of the Sudeten territories and the subjugation of the Czechs The historical roots of Czechoslovakia Czechoslovakia as a multiethnic state The Sudeten Germans German interference in the Czech Sudeten crisis The Czechoslovak escalation England's and France's interference Chamberlain's first attempt at mediation and Beness's proposal for the resettlement of the Sudeten Germans Roosevelt's rescue attempt The Czechs' concession The meeting in Bad Godesberg from 22. The Munich Conference of September 29-30, 1938 The Vienna Arbitration Award of November 2, 1938 The Reichskristallnacht on November 9, 1938 The mistake of the Czechs. November 1938 The "Free Hand in the East" Fallacy 79 The Disintegration of Czechoslovakia Czechoslovakia Becomes a Protectorate The Guarantee That Never Existed The Cause of World War II The Restitution of Memel The Open Colonial Question 80 THE YEARS OF CONQUEST The victorious powers of World War I give Europe a new territorial order that does not last long. With the breakup of the Habsburg and Ottoman multinational states and the reduction of the German Empire, new states emerge, some of which are torn out of their historical context, some of which are themselves burdened with the problems of the multinational state, and some of which explode the new order with dreams of great power in their luggage. With the Treaty of Versailles, Germany lost a not insignificant number of German-inhabited regions on the

German-inhabited regions on the edges of the old German Empire. Austria remains only as a rump of the Habsburg Empire with the German-speaking core of the former multiethnic state. The new Poland takes over the rule of two million Germans. The newly created Czechoslovakia includes over three and a half million German Bohemians, who have called themselves Sudeten Germans since the beginning of the century. The Versailles legacy also includes the clearing of a number of

German border regions of German military forces. In postwar Germany and Austria, parliaments and governments have been trying since 1919 to regain sovereignty in their own country, to assert the people's right to self-determination and to rebuild their ability to defend themselves against the outside world. The disputes over the order left behind by the victors characterize the 1920s, without any significant action being taken. The efforts of the German Reich to build up its defense capability and the refusal of the victors to fulfill their obligations to disarm their own armies, which they had undertaken at Versailles, are reserved for a later chapter of this book. But it is worth noting here that the British, French, Poles, Czechs, Belgians, and Italians themselves ruin the Versailles attempt to embed the postwar order in a Europe-wide disarmament before Germany begins to throw off "the shackles of Versailles" in 1933. In the 1920s, the victors failed to amend the Versailles order on their own initiative in such a way that Germany, Austria and Hungary could have lived with it. Instead, they leave it to the three defeated countries to do this themselves. Thus, the Saarland is reincorporated, the Rhineland is occupied by German military, and Austria, the Sudeten territories, and the Memelland are annexed to Germany. None of this is voluntary giving by the victorious states. Rather, it is first gentle and later hard pressure from Germany that changes things. But as the saying goes, the jug goes to the well until it

breaks. The victors, who do not give of their own accord but are only forced to give in, feel with time that the victory of 1918 is slipping through their fingers. When Germany under Hitler deprives the Czech Republic of its independence in 1939 and declares it a protectorate, the jug breaks even before the last damages of Versailles have been completely repaired. When Germany occupies Czechoslovakia, the victors are confronted with a new perspective. In retrospect, they see the occupation of the Rhineland and the annexation of Austria and the Sudeten territories as Germany's long run-up first to supremacy in Europe and then even to Germany's world domination¹. The victors' fear of this prevented the annexation of Danzig in 1939 and the solution of the transit route question through the Pomeranian Corridor in agreement between the new Poland and the German Reich. Thus, a look at the years from 1935 to 1939 is unavoidable if one wants to understand why the dispute over Danzig, over the annexation of a single German city, leads so quickly and at all to a new world war. The referendum on the Saar The first Anschluss fell into Hitler's lap, so to speak. During the victors' conference in Versailles, the French Prime Minister Clemenceau repeatedly assured Hitler that the Saarlanders were of French descent and, if of German origin, wanted to become citizens of France². At least this is what the French historian and politician Jacques Benoist-Mechin notes in one of his books. Despite the firm will of the French, their intention to swallow the Saar region as well did not find a majority in Versailles. The Russians, who had promised them the Saar in the secret treaty of 1917, are no longer present at Versailles. And U.S. President Wilson and British Prime Minister Lloyd George did not agree to Clemenceau's annexation of the Saarland, including its population and mineral resources. As a compromise between the three major victorious powers, the Saarland is initially placed under the administration of the League of Nations for 15 years. Only then, after a referendum, is it to be decided whether it will become permanently French, independent or German again. A five-member, internationally staffed "Saar Commission" is to govern the Saarland during these 15 years on behalf of the League of Nations. The Saar Commission is chaired by a French president. It soon turns out to be the sole representative of French interests. This does not change when the Canadian and German members of the commission leave the body in protest. This only worsens the situation in the Saar, to the detriment of the affected population. France is de facto the new ruler of the Saar. The protests of the ancestral 1 Lord Halifax, for example, speaks of "Germany's ambitious plans for world domination" before the House of Lords on March 20, 1939 2 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, p. 257 82 population are, as a rule, not even forwarded to the responsible League of Nations on the instructions of the French in the Commission³. The government in Paris transfers 5,000 French soldiers to the Saar region against the provisions of the Versailles Treaty⁴. Most of the German civil servants are expelled and replaced by French ones. The same happens with the German company managements in the industry and mining in the Saar. But in 1935, the 15 years of the Saar Statute are over, and France has to tolerate the plebiscite established in Versailles in 1920. Thus, the fact of the referendum in the Saar is no credit to Chancellor Hitler. In the months leading up to the vote, a fierce election campaign rages in the Saar, in which the French administration has the home advantage locally, and the German Reich, on the other hand, has no direct access. The election campaign is deliberately waged by the French side against National Socialism and the new abuses in the German Reich. Emotions run high, and the referendum threatens to degenerate into harsh confrontations. Then the German head of government, Hitler, proposes to the French government that the future of the Saar be settled by a friendly agreement between the two governments and that the referendum be dispensed with⁵. His proposal was to rejoin the Saar region to the German Reich and to regulate by means of an economic treaty that French industry would be allowed to exploit the Saarland's mineral resources as before. The French government rejected the proposal. It interpreted it as Hitler's admission of Germany's poor chances in the election. On January 13, 1935, elections are held under the supervision of the League of Nations. 90.8 percent of the

Saarlanders vote for annexation to the German Reich, 8.8 percent for Saar independence and 0.4 percent for annexation to France. There is no doubt that this election outside the German territory took place without German manipulations and pressures. And, thanks to the French campaign theme of "National Socialism in Germany," instead of a decision for Germany and against France, it looks like a broad approval of the new national socialism of German Chancellor Hitler. Thus, the French give Hitler a domestic political triumph that has a stronger after-effect than they suspect. For Hitler, the first Anschluss after the defeat of 1918 was also a plebiscite for the "movement. On March 1, 1935, sovereignty over the Saar region was transferred back to the German Reich. On this occasion, Hitler made a government declaration before the Reichstag in which he solemnly renounced the German claim to Alsace-Lorraine and recognized as final the border between France and Germany that had been redrawn by the return of the Saar 3 Nitti, page 115 4 According to the Treaty of Versailles, Part III, Article 50, Annex, § 30, the Saar region was to be kept free of military 5 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, page 259 83 Fig. 2: Election campaign before the Saar referendum 84 . France thus lost a first piece of its Versailles war booty legally. And Hitler, almost undeservedly, scored his first domestic political success by an Anschluss. German military sovereignty in the Rhineland The next "fetter of Versailles" to be cast off by Hitler was the demilitarization of the German Rhineland. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was required to keep the Rhineland, including the Palatinate on the left bank of the Rhine and a zone 50 kilometers deep on the right bank of the Rhine from Switzerland to the Netherlands, free of its own troops and fortifications. In 1921 and 1923, despite the "peace" that had been concluded in the meantime, France and Belgium used this unprotected border to "punish" Germany for non-payment of reparations, occupying first Düsseldorf and Duisburg and then the entire Ruhr region with five army divisions. Nevertheless, in 1925, in the Locarno Pact⁶ , the German Imperial Government once again confirms this demilitarization of the German border region towards France in order to buy German membership in the League of Nations and the withdrawal of the French occupation troops from the "Cologne Zone"⁷. At the same time, the states of France, Germany and Belgium mutually guarantee each other the course of their common borders, and they agree that in the future "in no case will they call for an attack or invasion or war against each other"⁸. However, the détente between France and Germany hoped for at Locarno does not materialize. France expects Germany, in gratitude for its admission to the League of Nations, to adhere strictly to "Versailles" from now on. Otherwise it blocks the equal rights

of the Germans in the League of Nations as best it can. Germany, on the other hand, expects French concessions after the final renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine, especially as far as the burdens of Versailles are concerned. Thus, Locarno remains only a short flowering dream of the Franco-German rapprochement between the two wars. This is the first part of the prehistory of the German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936. The second part begins with a French-Russian treaty. In 1935, France and the Soviet Union replaced an expiring non-aggression pact of 1932 with a new friendship and mutual assistance pact⁹. To this pact 6 Locarno Security Pact of October 16, 1925, concluded between D, UK, F, B, IT, PO, and CSR. Also called the Rhine Pact. 7 The Jülich-Düren-Cologne-Bonn zone was to be cleared of occupation forces

in May 1924 under Article 429 of the Versailles Treaty. This had not happened. 8 Article 2 of the Locarno Treaty 9 French-Soviet. Treaty of May 2, 1935 85 Map 4: The demilitarized Rhineland, however, includes an additional protocol in which the Soviet Union and France pledge their arms assistance to each other even in the event that one of the two countries is attacked by a third country, and this is the special thing that even if the League of Nations does not recommend such arms assistance¹⁰. Thus the Soviet Union and France reserve the right to decide in their own authority who is the aggressor in the event of a dispute with third countries. Since the Soviet Union, by now well

rearmed, cannot count on being attacked by the small Baltic states or by the militarily far inferior Poles or 10 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, page 278. This additional protocol is omitted in the Treaty-Ploetz. 86 Romania to be attacked, the pact only makes sense in a war with Germany. France, however, had pledged by treaty at Locarno to conduct no more military operations against Germany except in its own defense or on the basis of previous commitments France had made to the Poles and the Czechs. A French promise to assist the Soviet Union with arms in the event of a German-Soviet confrontation is thus a breach of the Locarno Pact. And in Locarno, and this is of importance here, the aforementioned demilitarization of the German Rhineland is promised on the part of Germany, which Hitler now denounces in return. The signing of the French-Soviet treaty on May 2, 1935, was preceded by a diplomatic dispute between Paris and Berlin that lasted several months and in which the guarantor powers of the Locarno Pact indirectly played their part. In April 1935, British Foreign Secretary Simon warned the French government "that England would be alarmed if France signed a treaty which might possibly involve her in war with Germany, and on terms incompatible with §2 of the Locarno Pact." 11 On May 25, 1935, the German Government sends a memorandum to the French claiming that the new Soviet-French treaty is inconsistent with Article 16 of the League of Nations, and that, in Germany's view, it violates the Locarno Pact¹². The French Government replies that, after all, the new treaty does not establish a Franco-Soviet military alliance and is otherwise entirely in conformity with the League of Nations Treaty and the Locarno Pact. For its own security, France also consulted the guarantor powers of Locarno, England, Italy and Belgium, and had them confirm that they considered the Locarno Pact to be still valid after the conclusion of the French-Soviet mutual assistance pact. In January 1936, the Reich government tries once again to avert the French-Soviet treaty by other means. It offers Paris to conclude a Franco-German non-aggression pact. France rejected the proposal. Thus, Berlin lost a round to Paris in terms of foreign policy. On February 27, 1936, the Soviet-French mutual assistance pact is ratified by the French National Assembly. For Hitler, the Soviet-French treaty is a setback in the effort to secure Germany externally. His 1934 success, the nonaggression pact with Poland, had broken France's ring around Germany. With its newly concluded alliance with the Soviets, Paris plugged the 11 Benoist-Mechin, vol. 3, p. 282 ¹² ADAP, Series C, vol. IV 1, Appendix to Document 107 87 gap with a new brother in arms. For Germany's security, this turn of events has two aspects. First, it becomes apparent that Paris did not give unconditional credence to the German guarantees in the Locarno Treaty, and that another war was certainly being contemplated. Secondly, the alliance of Germany's potential enemies on France's side is being strengthened by another million soldiers. In memory of the Franco-Russian interaction of 1914, this is not a good prospect for Germany. Sober reflection shows that in 1935 France is once again expanding its alliance system to Germany's detriment, that the French armed forces are still far superior to the German Wehrmacht, which is still in the process of being built up, and that Germany's border with France is open without protection. Hitler and the Reichswehr leadership are well aware that the denuding of the Rhine border of German troops not only serves the security of France, but is also intended to keep open for the French a gateway into the thus unprotected German Reich territory. After all, France's threat to invade Germany during the Upper Silesian battles of 1921 and the actual invasions by the Belgians and French on March 8, 1921, and January 11, 1923, have not been forgotten. Furthermore, the new Soviet-French Pact is, contrary to what the French government portrays, more than a purely political treaty. On February 13 and 14, 1936, Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky visits his French comrade in Paris, Commander-in-Chief General Gamelin¹³. And the German Abwehr is able to ascertain that the French General Staff has a plan in the works for possible cooperation between the French and Soviet forces. This plan provides for a French invasion through the Rhineland, denuded of German military, troop movements across the Middle Rhine, and then along the Main River line toward Czechoslovakia, where a union with the Soviet confederates is envisaged¹⁴.

The French violation of the Locarno Treaty by the conclusion of the mutual assistance agreement with the Soviet Union is a reason for Hitler not to adhere to this pact anymore and to justify the one with the other. Hitler made the political decision to reoccupy the Rhineland, which was not protected by German troops. At the beginning of March 1936, Hitler, the dictator, announced the decision to the top officials of the Foreign Office and the Wehrmacht. He was strongly advised against it from both sides. The German Embassy in Paris predicts that the French government will not tolerate the German move and will react militarily. General von Blomberg, as Reich Minister of War, asserts that the Wehr 13 Benoist-Mechin, vol. 3, p. 283 14 IMT. Verhandlungen, Band XVI, Seite 686 88 makes, which is just beginning its reconstruction, is several times inferior to the French forces in strength, armament, and reserves. Hitler predicts, against all advice, that France will not react militarily to an invasion of the Rhineland by German troops, despite all the above reasons. Map 5: The invasion of the Rhineland by the Wehrmacht 89 On March 7, 1936, Hitler has 19 Wehrmacht battalions march into the demilitarized zone¹⁵. In order not to add a military threat to the political provocation, initially only three of the 19 battalions cross the Rhine to the west and move into Saarbrücken, Trier and Aachen¹⁶. With this action, Hitler violates the treaties of Locarno and Versailles. But he is also creating the conditions for the German Reich's ability to defend itself to the west. Hitler accompanies this step with a new offer to France. He suggests, if France agrees to it, to establish in the future a demilitarized zone on both sides of the German-French border, to limit the German and French armed forces at common maximum numbers and to conclude a non-aggression pact of 25 years duration. The reactions of France and the other former victorious states prove Hitler right. The French government does have the army declare a state of alert, occupy the Maginot Line, and move North African divisions forward from southern France to the German border. Otherwise, it only tries to turn the Locarno Guarantee Powers and the League of Nations against Germany. But no one except Poles, Czechs, Romanians, and Yugoslavs pledges help to the French. The British government refuses to mobilize despite the French request. London does not want to jeopardize the naval treaty concluded with Germany only nine months ago and does not want to risk a new war in order to enforce a provision of the Versailles Treaty that is advantageous to France. London offers only its mediation services. The other Locarno guarantor powers, Belgium and Italy, join England's stance. On March 14, 1936, the Council of the League of Nations meets to decide on the German breach of the Versailles Treaty. The representative of France demands that Germany

to be accused and condemned of violating the treaty. The British representative declares for "His Majesty's Government": "It is obvious that the invasion of the Rhineland by German troops is a violation of the Versailles Peace Treaty. Nevertheless, this action does not constitute a threat to the peace and does not require the immediate counter-attack provided for in certain cases in the Locarno Pact. Undoubtedly the reoccupation of the Rhineland weakens the power of France, but it in no way weakens its security." ¹⁷ After seven days of deliberation, the League of Nations declares that Germany has violated Article 43 of the Versailles Peace Treaty. But it does not demand ¹⁵ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, page 294 ¹⁶ MGFA Dt. Reich und 2. Weltkrieg, Vol. 1, page 425 ¹⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, page 300 ⁹⁰ the withdrawal of German troops invading the Rhineland, nor sanctions. The consequences of this Hitler hand coup, however, are momentous in another way. Adolf Hitler was proved right in his Rhineland move against all advice of diplomats and generals. This clouds his confidence in the judgment of the appointed advisors and raises his own self-confidence, which later becomes excessive after further successes. He also begins to underestimate the drive of foreign governments. In the case of the German generals, the effect is just the opposite. Their confidence in their own judgment becomes fragile and they begin to give Hitler too much credit in matters of foreign and security policy. The Anschluss of

Austria The better heading would certainly have been "reunification" with Austria, but this process has now gone down in history with the word

"Anschluss." The futile attempts of the parliaments and governments of the German Reich and the Republic of Austria in 1919 to reunite the two countries as one state after almost a millennium of common history and 54 years of separation have left fewer traces in the annals of history than the Anschluss, which was successfully carried out by both countries in 1938. The prehistory The state commonality of the German lands, including those that later formed the state of Austria, began in 911 with the election of Conrad I as king of the East Frankish Empire, for which the name "Empire of the Germans" and later "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" soon became established. In 1273, the crown of this Holy Roman Empire goes for the first time to a prince from the House of Habsburg, Rudolf I, Duke of Austria, Duke of Styria, Carinthia and Carniola and Count of Tyrol. After him, princes from the houses of Nassau, Bavaria and Luxembourg wore the crown of the German king and emperor, before this dignity passed again in 1438 to a prince from the House of Habsburg, where it then remained in uninterrupted succession until 1806. Thus, for almost a millennium, the territories of the House of Habsburg were an integral part of the German Empire and the princes of Habsburg were at the same time the kings and emperors of Germany for the last 368 years. In 1806, after the French attacks on the German Empire and the formation of a "Rhine Confederation" of German principalities under French suzerainty, Emperor Francis II of the House of Habsburg dissolved the first German Empire by decree. At the same time, the now abdicated Emperor Franz II united his inherited lands of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Tyrol, Styria, Carniola, Carinthia and others to form the Austrian Empire, over which he ruled as Franz I from then on. However, the House of Habsburg's own path alongside its affiliation with Germany began a few centuries earlier. Through marriages, inheritances, purchases and treaties, many lands outside the German Empire come under Habsburg rule, either permanently or for a limited time, such as Hungary, Croatia, Galicia, Bukovina, Banat, Tuscany, the Duchy of Milan, part of Serbia and finally, in 1908, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Map 6: Habsburg lands before 1914 In 1815, after the collapse of Napoleonic domination and the dissolution of the French kingdoms in Europe, 36 German princes and four empire-free cities founded the German Confederation in place of the defunct German Empire. And again it is the head of the House of Habsburg who presides over the German Confederation, the Emperor of Austria. A good three decades later, another attempt is made to unite Germany into a solid state structure. In 1849, the Constituent National Assembly in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt proclaims a "united and indivisible empire," but opinions differ on the question of what should belong to the empire. The National Assembly calls on the Austrian government to become part of the new German Reich with its German lands and, at the same time, to renounce sovereign rights in all non-German lands. The National Assembly wants to found a Germany without foreign peoples under German rule. Thus, Austria is faced with the choice of becoming the first power in a new German Empire, but renouncing its non-German principalities in return, or remaining the first power in its own empire in the Danube region. Austria does not want to decide to become an exclusively German state. Thus, for the time being, it remains part of the German Confederation of 1815, and Austria continues to play its dual role as part of the German Confederation and as a multiethnic state in the Danube region. What followed were 17 years in which the political weights in the German Confederation shifted. Prussia begins to unite the German states through diplomacy and wars. Habsburg, meanwhile, loses power and influence, partly due to a war with France lost in 1859. In 1866, a dispute over the administration of Schleswig-Holstein leads to the German fratricidal war, in which the Emperor of Austria, as chairman of the German Confederation, represents imperial power for the last time. He calls the German army to arms against the Prussians. In this war, the Emperor once again leads the majority of all German states, the kingdoms of Hanover, Saxony, Württemberg and Bavaria,

along with a number of other smaller principalities. Only the Principality of Lippe and the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha were on Prussia's side, but at the Battle of Königgrätz in Bohemia, the Austrian army was crushed by the Prussian army. This ended Habsburg supremacy in the German Empire. The goal of Prussian policy in this war is to force Austria out of the German Confederation in order to unite the rest of the German lands into a new German Empire without the multi-ethnic state of Vienna. Thus, after the victory of Königgrätz, Prussia refrains from crushing Habsburg Austria, but it dissolves the German Confederation and puts the German-Austrians with their 16 non-German peoples on the German doorstep. Thus the German-German bond between German Austria and the other German countries is severed after 955 years of togetherness. In the following 48 years, the other German lands unite under Prussia's leadership to form the Second German Empire and develop a new German-Prussian consciousness. The Second German Empire and the Austrian Empire now go their own ways for less than half a century before they reunite as confederates in the First World War. These 48 years of separation had a profound influence on the sense of history and self-awareness in imperial Germany. The Habsburg roots of its own nation were forgotten in Prussian Germany. In this respect, this period of German division has similarities with the German division after the Second World War. The real political circumstances shape the consciousness and override the feeling of belonging to one another. And as in 1990 with the fall of the GDR, so in 1918 it is the defeat of both 93 German empires that brings Germans back together. Habsburg's great empire is crushed. 41 million former Habsburg subjects of non-German mother tongue found their own states or are forced to merge into other states. And 7 million German-Austrians remain in the new Republic of Austria with the territorial remnant that the victorious powers leave of Old-Habsburg at the Saint-Germain Conference. Map 7: Austria after 1919

The German-Austrian rapprochement The 54 years of German-German separation since 1866 have not allowed the feeling of belonging to the same people to die in Germany and Austria any more than the 45 years of German division among the Germans in West and Central Germany after 1945. In 1919, Social Democratic governments in the new republics of Germany and Austria take over the destinies of their constituent nations. In Austria, the parliamentarians charged with drafting a new state constitution unanimously pass the following resolution at their first working session on November 12, 1918: 94 "German Austria shall be a democratic republic. All public authorities shall be appointed by the people. German Austria is an integral part of the German Republic." 18 A good week later, on November 21, the Austrian National Assembly also claims to represent all Germans from the old Habsburg: "The German-Austrian state claims territorial power over the entire German settlement area, especially also in the Sudeten lands." 19 In the new German Reich, politicians harbored the same desires. On February 6, 1919, Representative Scheidemann (SPD) concludes his opening speech to the constituent session of the Weimar National Assembly with an appeal to "the brothers in Bohemia and Austria." He ends his speech with the words, "May the time be near when our Austrian brothers will once again take their place in the great German national community." On March 2, 1919, the first post-war National Assembly gathers in Vienna for its inaugural session. Almost unanimously, with the exception of a handful of monarchists, the delegates from all the parties represented decide to regard Austria as part of Germany. Thus the decision of the Constituent Assembly of November 12, 1918, declaring German Austria to be part of the German Republic, becomes law. On the same day, March 2, the Austrian deputy Otto Bauer and the German Foreign Minister Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau signed a state treaty on the annexation of Austria to the new German Republic. But the victorious powers immediately put a stop to this kind of right to self-determination of peoples. When the Austrian peace delegation arrived in Saint-Germain, it was immediately told that the Republic of Austria was forbidden to join Germany and that the defeated Austria was not allowed to call itself "German Austria". The head of the delegation from Vienna, State Chancellor Dr. Renner, protests, refers to

Wilson's 14 points and invokes the right of self-determination of peoples proclaimed by the victors themselves. He receives the answer that this right in no way also applies to the defeated. The victorious powers had so decided. The Austrian delegation cannot and is not allowed to negotiate the Treaty of Saint-Germain any more than the Germans are allowed to negotiate the Treaty of Versailles. Only the exchange of notes is permitted. The five victorious powers, the United States, France, England, Japan and Italy, who pronounce their judgment on Austria in Saint-Germain, stipulate in Article 88 of their conditions for peace that Austria must remain permanently independent. While the victors are still sitting in Saint-Germain, the Austrian government tries to give them and the 18 IMT. Negotiations, Vol. XV, p. 666 19 IMT. Verhandlungen, Band XV, Seite 666 95 League of Nations how strong the will of the population is to join the German Reich²⁰. It schedules three regional referenda in Tyrol, in the province of Salzburg, and in Upper Austria. The Tyrolean referendum brings 143,302 votes for the Anschluss and 1,805 against²¹. This is a vote of 98.7% for the unification of Austria with Germany. The referenda in Upper Austria and Salzburg are suppressed by the victors. Nevertheless, a citizens' initiative succeeds in catching up with the referendum in Salzburg, albeit only in 1921. The result, with 98,546 votes in favor and 877 against, i.e. 99.1% in favor of the annexation, leaves no questions unanswered. Four days before the Austrian delegation has to sign the victor's verdict in Saint-Germain, on September 6, 1919, State Chancellor Dr. Renner announces once again in the Vienna National Assembly: "German-Austria will never renounce to consider the reunification with the German Reich as the goal of its peaceful policy." This is a last stand. The naked power of hunger also forced Austria to give in just like Germany. England, from the Armistice until July 1919, cut off the food supply to Germany and Austria by a naval blockade to force the defeated to sign at Versailles and Saint-Germain. In the meantime, nearly a million people died of starvation in both countries, especially many children. Austria and Germany can now no longer risk a resumption of the blockade by refusing to sign, for Great Britain has threatened it. On September 10, the Austrian government must accept the Treaty of Saint-Germain and sign it. On October 21, under pressure from the victors, it has to delete from the Constitution the sentence "German Austria is a constituent part of the German Republic" On July 18, 1920, the Parliament in Vienna ratifies the Treaty of Saint-Germain, and Austria, against the will of the great majority of its citizens, is again on the German doorstep. Regardless of this, all Austrian parties except Legalists (monarchists) and Communists include the eventual annexation of their country as a goal in their party programs. This applies to the Social Democrats, the German Nationalists, the National-Liberal Peasants' Party as well as the Christian Socialists, who from 1934, having become a dictatorship party, fight the annexation to the Reich. In the German Reich, the Anschluss question was thought of and acted upon no differently than in Tyrol, Salzburg or Vienna. Already in Weimar, at the first session of the 20 Bernhardt, p. 45 21 IMT Verhandlungen, vol. XV, p. 667 96 German National Assembly on February 6, 1919, the later Reich President Friedrich Ebert declared on this question: "German Austria must be united with the motherland for all time.... Our tribal and destiny comrades may be assured that we welcome them with open arms and hearts in the new empire of the German nation. They belong to us and we belong to them." But the Treaty of Versailles also stipulates that the right of self-determination of the Germans in the two defeated states may not be carried out in this matter. Article 80 of the treaty, signed on June 28, 1919, states that "Germany recognizes the independence of Austria and will regard it as unalterable strictly within the limits established by the present treaty, except with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations." The German Reichstag sees in the postscript "unless with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations" the open door for later times. With this vague prospect, on August 11, 1919, the deputies of the German Reichstag added Article 61 to the Weimar Constitution, which reads, "After its annexation to the German Reich, German Austria shall receive the right of participation in the Reichsrat with the number

of votes corresponding to its population. Until then, the representatives of German Austria shall have an advisory vote." Thus the Weimar Constitution speaks of the coming annexation of Austria in Article 61, just as the Bonn Basic Law speaks of the "accession of the other parts of Germany" in Article 23 30 years later. Only five weeks later, on September 22, 1919, the German Reichstag has to amend the Weimar Constitution again under pressure from the victorious powers and delete Article 61. The German-Austrian Unification Treaty of November 1918, concluded by Bauer and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, is consigned to the archives as a dead document without ever being ratified by the parliaments in Berlin and Vienna. But the feeling of belonging together with the people of Austria remains with the citizens and parties in the German Reich. As late as 1932, Reichstag deputy and later Federal President Theodor Heuss described the "Greater German idea" of belonging together with Austria as one of the few ideas that the parties of the Weimar Republic carried with each other^{22 23}. From the point of view of the victors, the ban on German-Austrian unification initially made perfect sense. With an affiliated Austria, the defeated Germany would have compensated for its losses in land and people. ²² Bernhardt, page 31 ²³ Heuss, page LX 97 . But this arithmetic game of the victors disregards their self-established rule of the right of self-determination of peoples. Moreover, an independent Austria would help to keep Germany's economy out of the countries of the Danube and Balkan regions. Postwar Austria The 1920s are poor and bitter for Austria. The Habsburg economic network is shattered. Sudeten German industry in Czechoslovakia and the agricultural areas of Hungary are cut off from Austria. Conversely, Austrian industry lacks its old sales market in the Danube region. German-speaking civil servants and soldiers streamed in large numbers from the non-German Habsburg principalities back to the heartland of Austria, without being offered wages and work there. The cost of living rises, food becomes scarce, the number of unemployed climbs to 800,000 who search unsuccessfully for employment, and Austria's foreign debts soon become impossible to pay off. The Social Democratic government under Dr. Renner is unable to solve the country's economic and social problems and in 1920 has to give way to a coalition government of church-affiliated, so-called clerical forces and liberals under Monsignor Dr. Seipel. Even Dr. Seipel and his successors in office were unable to overcome the economic problems of the young republic. A banking crisis in 1928, large foreign trade deficits and the persistently excessive foreign debt forced the Austrian government to find new solutions. Thus it pursued the formation of a customs union with Germany. In 1931, the foreign ministers from Berlin and Vienna attempted to establish a German-Austrian economic and customs union, probably with the wish on both sides that this would be the foundation stone for a state unification. After all, the hope for later unification with Germany is unbroken in Austria, and all political parties except monarchists (legalists) and Marxists agree on this and express it again and again. Thus, on November 12, 1928, the leader of the Social Democrats, Dr. Renner, recalled in a public speech the decision of the constitutional fathers to unite Austria and Germany and declared: "Today, ten years after November 10

1918, and evermore, we faithfully adhere to this decision and reaffirm it by our signature.... The Peace of Saint-Germain has destroyed the right of self-determination of the Germans in Austria Let Austria's citizens vote freely and they will decide by 99 votes out of 100 to reunite with Germany. "²⁴ ²⁴ Kern, page 77 ⁹⁸ The attitude of the ruling Christian Socialists does not deviate from this. In 1931, they again declared in a party resolution that their goal was to annex Austria to Germany. Such speeches and resolutions do not go unnoticed by the World War II victors, and this is how their reaction to the customs union is to be understood. On March 24, 1931, the German-Austrian economic and customs union was sealed with the "Vienna Protocol. Protests from Paris, London, Prague and Rome began to pour in. The governments of England and France take the Vienna Protocol to the League of Nations in Geneva²⁵ as a violation of Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain. The action is decided by the Hague Court, which prohibits the customs union as inadmissible. On top of that, France feels compelled

to punish Austria. It withdraws loans from Austria, which is already weakened, causing the Österreichische Kreditanstalt to collapse in May 1931 and the Darmstädter National-Bank a little later. Thus, Austria's economic difficulties worsen once again, and another attempt by the two countries to converge toward eventual unity fails. The next few years in Austria are as politically turbulent as those in the German Reich. On May 21, 1932, the Christian Socialist Engelbert Dollfuß takes over the Austrian government. He, too, is unable to curb unemployment, financial misery and economic decline. In the summer of 1932, Dollfuß therefore negotiated with the League of Nations for a further state loan. But the League made it conditional on Austria renouncing any attempt to form a customs union with Germany for the next ten years. The parliamentary debates on this condition of the League of Nations led to serious disputes in August and October 1932, during which the National Council ultimately forced through new parliamentary elections for the spring of 1933. Another parliamentary crisis in March 1933, which at first was only about a railroad strike, led to the National Council's dismissal of Chancellor Dollfuß on March 15, 1933, with an incorrect decision. Dollfuß, for his part, had the police occupy the parliament building and the National Council never met again. Since 1933, Austria has no longer been ruled by a parliament, but by a dictator. In May 1933 Dollfuß first forbids the National Council elections scheduled for that month, then he bans the Communist Party and in June the National Socialist Party in Austria. In September,

so-called "Anhaltelager" (detention camps) are set up to imprison political opponents. They correspond to the concentration camps that are also established in Germany in the same year. In mid-February 1934, a police operation follows to arrest the fighting unit of the 25 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Second Series, Volume II, Documents 1 to 29 26 First Chamber of Parliament, Corresponds to the Bundestag 99 Social Democratic Party, the "Schutzbund." As a result, there is first resistance and street fighting in Linz and Vienna. Then the Social Democratic Party is banned and the Free Trade Unions are dissolved. In this way, Dollfuß disempowered all the parties and organizations of Austrian labor without being able to improve the lot of the workers in the slightest. Meanwhile, in the nearby German Reich, the economy begins to recover slowly but clearly. The plight of the German workforce decreases. The number of unemployed is falling. And this economic miracle is, of all things, the political success of a party banned in Austria, the National Socialists. With the German economic upswing, not only the annexation to the German Reich becomes popular again in Austria, but also the National Socialist movement. It is known that the National Socialist movement is working for the annexation of Austria to the German Reich. Still in May 1933, Chancellor Dollfuß founded the so-called Vaterländische Front (Patriotic Front) as a substitute for the parties and their associated associations, on which he henceforth based the government and administration of his country. The majority of the parties that did not belong to the Front loosely formed the "National Opposition. The majority of them supported Austria's annexation to the German Reich. Chancellor Dollfuß, in his younger years himself an advocate of Austrian-German unity, puts an end to the previous consensus of the Austrian parties on annexation to the German Reich. Dollfuß, who as a dictator in his own country had no desire to risk his power and rule with new elections, was even more unwilling to lose both in the event of Austria's annexation to the German Reich. Thus, Austria's Anschluss policy ends with Dollfuß and the end of democracy in post-war Austria. Now a tragic event takes place, which goes down in history as the "Dollfuß murder", but is a manslaughter not intended by the perpetrators. Austria's National Socialists see that the German sister party's path to power in Germany was possible through free elections. In Austria, Chancellor Dollfuß blocked this possibility by not allowing new National Council elections. A direct coup to power has virtually no chance of success, since Hitler, who could theoretically help here, lets it be known that he does not yet consider the time to annex Austria to have come, and because the signatory powers of Saint-Germain would never tolerate a Nazi coup in Austria. And in 1934, with its Wehrmacht not yet

rebuilt and with the Rhineland border with France still open, Germany would not have had the slightest chance of successfully supporting Austria's National Socialists in such a confrontation. Thus, the leadership of Austria's National Socialists developed a two-stage plan to seize power without German help. First, Dollfuß is to be captured and tried as dictator. Then, in his place, Rintelen, a Christian Socialist former minister of the interior who had been booted out by Dollfuß in 1930, is to become chancellor. Under Rintelen, a democrat without dictatorial ambitions, there will be free elections again. And with these elections, the leadership of the Austrian National Socialists hopes for victory and legal takeover of the government. Rintelen makes himself available as the new chancellor if this coup succeeds. On July 25, 1934, Chancellor Dollfuß is to be arrested during a cabinet meeting. But the action is betrayed at the last moment. Dollfuß flees in a group of people through the corridors of his chancellery in the Vienna Ballhaus. The putschists and the Dollfuß group meet abruptly in a hall with blindingly bright lights. The escorts from the Dollfuß group raise their hands in surrender, and Dollfuß is the only one of the group who rushes forward towards the foremost putschist. The latter does not recognize the chancellor in the bright light, feels attacked himself, loses his nerve and shoots twice instead of arresting the wanted man. Thus, Chancellor Dollfuß dies from the bullets fired at him by an Austrian National Socialist.²⁷ The population takes note of the crime against their chancellor with disgust. Dollfuß, the dictator who had been rejected by all Austrian democrats until then, becomes the nation's martyr overnight, and the National Socialists are met with the justified indignation of people all over Austria. Rintelen, the co-conspirator, gets 25 years in prison. The death shooter and with him another 12 putschists are sentenced to death and soon executed. Standing under his gallows, the gunman declares once again that he had never intended to kill Chancellor Dollfuß. He had only shot because he felt attacked. The death of Chancellor Dollfuß imbued the National Socialists of Austria with the odium of crime and putsch. Their reputation sank and with it the attractiveness of the annexation to the German Reich that they had propagated. To make matters worse, Germany became involved in the case after the shooting of the dictator Dollfuß. When the attempt to arrest Dollfuß has failed so tragically, the putschists are surrounded by police and military in the Ballhaus. They demand free withdrawal across the border into Bavaria and threaten to entrench themselves with their weapons if they refuse to leave. Initially, free withdrawal is promised. The putschists do not trust the promise and call the German ambassador in Vienna by telephone to the Ballhaus to guarantee and supervise their withdrawal. The ambassador spontaneously agrees to intervene to prevent further bloodshed. He does not get a chance to do so, but with the putschists fleeing to Germany and with the appearance of the German ambassador, ²⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 5, page 151 101 the German Reich is implicated in this putsch for everyone in Austria and for the whole world. The false impression is created that the strings for the affair and for the death of the Chancellor were pulled from German offices. This put a damper on the desire for an annexation to the German Reich, which had been generally cherished in Austria until then.

The Dollfuß era was followed by the Schuschnigg era. After Dollfuß's death, Austrian-German relations were initially frozen for two years. There are no free elections under Chancellor Schuschnigg either. The autocracy of the "Vaterländische Front" (Fatherland Front), which emerged from the Christian Social Party, now takes on a Christian dictatorial orientation. Schuschnigg also tries to prevent Austria's unification with Germany. It was not until the summer of 1936, under gentle pressure from Italy, that the two German-speaking states attempted rapprochement again. On July 11, 36, Chancellor von Schuschnigg and von Papen, the German special envoy to Austria, sign a German-Austrian agreement on normalization and friendly relations between the two states. In it, Germany recognizes the "full sovereignty of the federal state of Austria," and Austria expressly acknowledges that it is a German state. In the addendum to the agreement, Schuschnigg assures in writing that "representatives of the hitherto so-called National Opposition in Austria" will be brought in to share political responsibility.

Hitler commented on the agreement to the leader of the Austrian National Socialists, Josef Leopold, saying, "I take this new agreement very seriously. The Austrian National Socialists must maintain exemplary discipline and regard the Anschluss as an inner-Austrian affair, and try to make progress in Austria by this means." ²⁸ Hitler considered the eventual annexation of Austria to be an inevitable consequence of the will of the majority of the Austrian population, so often expressed in the past. The sovereignty of the federal state of Austria, recognized by Germany, does not stand in the way of this in Hitler's view. Hitler is sure that the annexation of Austria will one day be the free and sovereign decision of an Austrian government. But he is to be mistaken. Regrettably, the agreement of July 11 cannot bridge the German-Austrian differences. Chancellor Schuschnigg wants to preserve a sovereign Austria in the Habsburg tradition, a second "better" German state. When the Austrian government showed no signs of fulfilling its promise of July 1936 and of involving forces from the National Opposition in political responsibility, relations between Berlin and Vienna again became tense. In the period that followed, pro- and anti-German demonstrations of popular will took turns in Austria. In April 1937, at German insistence, Schuschnigg appoints a mediator between the government and the forces of the so-called National Opposition to bring them to share political responsibility, as promised. The mediator is the young and non-party lawyer Dr. Seyß-Inquart, who has the confidence of his chancellor Schuschnigg as well as soon that of Adolf Hitler ²⁹. Seyß-Inquart makes no secret of his desire for Austria's annexation to the German Reich. Despite the German-Austrian agreement of July 1936 and Seyß-Inquart's mediation activities, the pressure of the dictatorship in the Danube state does not let up. The documentation of a Viennese lawyer from June 1937 bears witness to how the courts, party authorities, gendarmerie and police dealt in 1936 and 37 with people who, in the spirit of the first Austrian constitution of 1918, still professed unity with the German Reich ³⁰. The documentation "Justitia fundamentum regnorum", which was forwarded to Chancellor Schuschnigg, contains 264 examples of violations of the law and persecution of members of the "National Opposition". This list of sins is considerable. It includes - imprisonment without trial, - incarceration in concentration camps without trial and judgment, - pre-trial detention without a court order, - coercive detention for relatives of the accused, - imprisonment and fines without proof of guilt, - imprisonment without the existence of a criminal offense, - double punishment in two separate proceedings for one and the same offense, - additional economic penalties such as confiscation of property, - withdrawal of driver's license or charging of board and lodging costs during concentration camp imprisonment, - reversal of the burden of proof in criminal proceedings, - extortion of confessions, - physical abuse of prisoners, - omission of medical treatment of sick or injured political prisoners, sometimes resulting in death, - deprivation of Austrian citizenship after unauthorized trips to Germany, ²⁹ Seyß-Inquart did not join the National Socialist Party of Austria until 1938. ³⁰ Führer-Dokumentation 103 - Withdrawal of craft and trade licenses as well as licenses for academic professions from persons with "insufficient civic reliability" and - Dismissal of members of the civil service because of "suspicion of national sentiments" without pensions and unemployment benefits. The reasons for these punishments are always similar. They are affiliations with banned parties, usually the Austrian National Socialists, or with one of the many German-minded singing and sports clubs, or even just the defendant's desire for a German-Austrian association and sometimes just a suspicion in this direction. From 1935 to 1937, France, England, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia show less and less sympathy for "authoritarian" Austria. Italy, too, turns away from Austria and toward Germany. In addition, an economic upswing like that in Germany was a long time coming. In the same period, the Saarlanders join the German Reich with 90.8% pro-German votes, and the formerly open Rhineland border is once again under the protection of German troops. No such successes are seen in Austria, and a new path to Habsburg glory and greatness is not open to the small country. In addition, the dictatorship in Austria hardly differs from that in

Germany, so that the latter is no reason to reject an annexation. Thus, the annexation of Austria to the German Reich again becomes an attractive prospect for Austria's citizens. Especially many people from the working class, even if they were not close to the National Socialists, saw an economic hope in the Anschluss. Chancellor Schuschnigg, who senses the isolation of his country in foreign policy and knows the urge of wide sections of the population to join the Reich, asks Envoy von Papen to arrange a state visit to Hitler. The visit took place on February 12, 1938. On this trip, Schuschnigg was certainly prepared to make certain concessions by Austria to German wishes. But he had not expected the demands that Hitler presented to him on that February 12 in Berchtesgaden. Hitler's wish had certainly been that a freely elected National Council and an Austrian government, by virtue of the right of self-determination of the peoples, would of their own accord proclaim the annexation of Austria to the German Reich, the annexation which the constitutional fathers of Austria and the National Council had already firmly decided upon two decades ago. But Hitler meanwhile realized that with the dictatorship of the Christian-Socialist Schuschnigg, without parliament and without elections, there was no legal way open for an annexation. The conversation between the two dictators Schuschnigg and Hitler was, according to Schuschnigg's account, and only this has been handed down to us, a single argument. Hitler reproaches Schuschnigg for many things, the actions of the police in Austria against the National Socialist Party, border fortifications against Germany and other things. When Schuschnigg defends Austria's independence and insists that it is he who represents Austria here, Hitler doubts his legitimacy and says: "I could call myself an Austrian with the same and even more right than you, Mr. Schuschnigg. Why don't you try it and hold a free referendum in Austria in which you and I run against each other, and then you will see!"³¹ Hitler has in mind that Schuschnigg did not come into office three years ago –through elections, as he himself did–but as a substitute for the dead Dollfuß. Hitler presents Schuschnigg with a "list of German proposals for a final settlement of the Austrian question." The main demands are: – Compulsory consultation for both governments in foreign policy matters, – Appointment of State Councilor Dr. Seyß-Inquart as Minister of the Interior and subordination of the security services to him, – Freedom of political activity for the Austrian National Socialist Party to operate legally within the framework of the "Fatherland Front," – Amnesty for all Austrians imprisoned for National Socialist political activity, – Restoration of freedom of the press, – Cooperation between the armed forces of Austria and Germany, – Preparation for the harmonization of the economic systems of the two countries under the direction of a certain Dr. Fischböck as Minister of Finance, and the – assurance of the German Reich government that Reich German party offices would not interfere in domestic Austrian affairs. The "proposals" end with the ultimatum: "The Federal Chancellor declares himself ready to implement the agreed measures by February 18, 1938,"³² i.e. in only one week. Chancellor Schuschnigg, on the other hand, argues that part of the demands under the constitution can only be met by the Austrian Federal President, and he succeeds in getting the constitution adopted. and he succeeds in negotiating and changing a few details with Hitler. For example, Dr. Fischböck does not become Minister of Finance. But after Hitler made it clear to him that he had to sign Schuschnigg's name or Hitler could do otherwise, Schuschnigg put his name under the paper. Returning to Vienna, the Austrian chancellor had to put the German demands into practice, reshuffle his cabinet, grant amnesty to the convicted, and persuade the federal president to do all this. The National Socialists, now freed from the ban and without further persecution by the police, mobilized the masses in Graz, Salzburg, Klagenfurt and Linz and openly showed their sympathy for a Anschluss solution. Minister Seyß-Inquart drives through the provinces to urge the leaders of the National Socialists in the provinces to show moderation, but the train can no longer be stopped. The pressure from the street grows and Hitler subsequently insists once again on the demand that Dr. Fischböck be appointed Austria's Finance Minister. Dr. Schuschnigg's "Referendum" Now Chancellor Schuschnigg takes flight. He believes that

the majority of Austria's citizens are in favor of the country's independence and against an Anschluss. He also obviously harbors illusions about the popularity of his own person. On Wednesday, March 9, Schuschnigg unexpectedly scheduled a referendum on the Anschluss question for the following Sunday, four days later. The short deadline and many other things show that the chancellor is acting in panic. For example, he failed to consult all the ministers on the referendum plan, which would have been required under Article 65 of the Constitution. Since there have been no elections at the federal level since 1929 and at the provincial level since 1932, and because elections were generally banned by Dollfuß in 1933, there are no longer any current voter lists in the whole of Austria. In addition, the chancellor, who had become accustomed to democracy, decreed that election supervision and vote counting were to be carried out solely by the "Vaterländische Front," i.e., by the government camp. Furthermore, Chancellor Schuschnigg limits the voting age downward to 25. He fears that young voters in particular will tend toward an annexation to the German Reich. And last but not least, Dr. Schuschnigg orders that only ballot papers with the imprint "YES", which means a yes to independence, be handed out in the polling stations. Anyone voting in favor of Austria's annexation to the German Reich must produce his own ballot paper, marked "No," in the prescribed size, and bring it to the polls. In § 22 of the decree on this referendum, the following is regulated: "The ballot paper ... shall be valid with 'Yes' printed or written on one side, even if the word is crossed out or with a by-line. Even partially torn ballots with the word "Yes " printed or written on them shall be considered as yes votes. Those persons who wish to vote "No" must handwrite the word "No" on a slip of paper of the same size according to the above arrangement. Ballots containing the word "No" with any addition shall be invalid. Completely blank ballots count as 33 yes votes." 33 Otherwise, Chancellor Schuschnigg negotiates hurriedly with the leaders of the previously banned parties and the dissolved trade unions in order to win them over for election 33 *Ländergesetzblatt für Oberösterreich vom 10. März 1938* 106 appeals against an Anschluss. As a price, the leaders so suddenly approached demanded that their parties be immediately readmitted, and they demanded that their party members, thousands of whom had been imprisoned in the "detention camps," finally be released. But Dr. Schuschnigg's faked referendum is not without opposition. Interior Minister Seyß-Inquart and another member of the government, Minister Glaise-Horstenau, immediately inform their chancellor that the scheduling of this election without prior consultation of the cabinet is unconstitutional, and that it is unacceptable that the ruling Vaterländische Front alone supervises the elections and then counts the votes at the end. The two ministers demand that the referendum be postponed until a later date so that the elections can be prepared. Chancellor Schuschnigg rejects Seyß-Inquart's and Glaise-Horstenau's concerns and demands. The next day, Seyß-Inquart repeats his objection in a letter to Chancellor Schuschnigg, who writes back that the election will be held next Sunday. There are now only three days until then. On March 11, after another night, Ministers Seyß-Inquart and Glaise-Horstenau try once again to change Schuschnigg's mind. They point out that the hastily scheduled election date and the election conditions that have been set so far could lead to violence in the country. Schuschnigg insists on his election on Sunday in two days. In response, the two ministers, on their own behalf and on behalf of other cabinet members, sent an ultimatum to the chancellor late that morning. The six conditions contained in this letter are 1. A new referendum will be held within a period of four weeks. It will be in accordance with Article 65 of the Federal Constitution. 2. the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Seyß-Inquart, will be entrusted with the technical conduct of this referendum. 3. the composition of the electoral commission shall be such that a representative of the National Socialists shall be seated in each one. (4) All parties, including the National Socialists, are to be given the opportunity to carry out election propaganda. 5. in the event that the above conditions are rejected, the two ministers and the other national functionaries shall announce their resignation and disclaim all responsibility for further events. 6 These conditions must be accepted

today, by 1 p.m. at the latest. "34 When Schuschnigg reads this letter, he has only one hour left to make a decision. The deadline is unacceptably short, but the Austrian Minister of the Interior 34 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 5, p. 248 107 ster demands nothing more from his chancellor here than that the election be held according to law and order and with equal opportunities for all political parties. After two hours, Chancellor Schuschnigg let the minister know that they could talk about the general conditions of the election, but not about postponing it. The referendum would take place in two days on Sunday, as had once been decided. Now Seyß-Inquart gives up all further attempts. He telephones Minister Goering in the German Reich Chancellery directly from the Chancellery in the Ballhaus and asks for advice.

Reunification In Germany, people have been following the turmoil in Austria since March 9. Hitler was immediately informed of Schuschnigg's surprise election. It is not difficult to see through the intent behind the curious election arrangements. Election supervision and counting of votes only by one's own people already smell of intent to falsify, and, to exclude young voters is the obvious attempt to keep pro-German voters away from the polls. Hitler sees the chance dwindling that Austria's citizens will be able to decide in free and correct elections for annexation to the German Reich at a later date, if the opposite has been decided beforehand after a manipulated referendum. On March 9, Schuschnigg announces his election plan. That same evening, Hitler and Minister Göring confer about this Schuschnigg move. Hitler is annoyed, but at first he has no concept of how to react. Goering, who has lived in Austria for a few years and who feels that Germans and Austrians are one nation, is a staunch advocate of the unification of the two part-nations. He urges Hitler to intervene quickly in Austria³⁵. Thus comes about the decision to intervene both politically and militarily in Austria. The day after the election announcement, on March 10, Hitler gives the order at 11 o'clock in the morning for Wehrmacht divisions to march into Austria on March 12, one day before the planned referendum. Hitler's hastily drafted directive reads: "The Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht Berlin, March 11, 1938 Directive No. 1 1. I intend, if other means do not lead to the desired result, to enter Austria with armed forces in order to establish constitutional conditions there and to prevent further acts of violence against the German-minded population. ... The Army and Air Force forces designated for the operation must be ready to move in or set up no later than 12:00 noon on 12 March. 35 IMT Negotiations, Vol. IX, p. 333 108. I reserve the right to authorize the crossing and overflight of the border and to fix the time for this. The conduct of the troops must take into account the fact that we do not wish to wage war against a brother nation. It is in our interest that the whole enterprise proceed without the use of force in the form of a peaceful invasion welcomed by the population. Therefore, any provocation must be avoided. If, however, resistance should arise, it is to be broken with the utmost ruthlessness by force of arms. Austrian units crossing over will immediately come under German command. 6. 6 For the time being, no security measures of any kind are to be taken on the German borders with the other states. Adolf Hitler" 36 Shortly after 9 p.m. on the same evening, the corresponding orders are sent to the troops, who had not been warned until then, leaving them only 13 hours. On March 11, the ordered units were already rolling in the direction of Austria. Whether the invasion will take place, however, is not decided, because Hitler, in paragraph 4 of Instruction No. 1, keeps open the door to stop the troops if, as written in paragraph 1, "other means lead to the goal. The political strings are now being pulled primarily by Minister Göring. Three hours after Hitler has put his signature to Instruction No. 1, on March 11 at about 2:30 p.m., there is the aforementioned phone call from Seyß-Inquart in Vienna to Goering in Berlin. The Austrian Minister of the Interior informs Minister Göring that Chancellor Schuschnigg is still unwilling to postpone the referendum to a reasonable time. Göring asks Seyß-Inquart to stay on the line for a moment, goes to Hitler and informs him of the news from Vienna. Both see that there is no more chance for a fair referendum on the Anschluss question. They decide to intervene directly in Austrian affairs and replace Schuschnigg with Seyß-Inquart. Göring hastily puts

the decision on paper, goes back to the telephone and dictates to Seyß-Inquart, who is waiting at the other end of the line: "Tell Schuschnigg this verbatim: The ultimatum is considered rejected after the answer given. The resignation of Dr. Schuschnigg is now to be demanded. Dr. Seyß-Inquart is to be entrusted with the formation of the new government. The majority of the new cabinet must consist of National Socialists. The referendum is cancelled. A new referendum will be held in 14 days along the lines of 36 IMT Documents, Volume XXXIV, Document 102 C 109 of the Saar Referendum. You have to give notice within one hour. If you have not called after the deadline set, it is assumed here that you are prevented from telephoning. In die-37 sem case we will act accordingly." 37 Seyß-Inquart passes the ultimatum on to the Chancellor. Now Schuschnigg grasps at the last straw he sees. He tries to call Mussolini, the head of the Italian government, to get help from him. The answer, which is transmitted after a short while, only says that the Italian government abstains from any statement in the momentary situation of Austria. Without a single ally abroad and with dubious backing among his own people, Schuschnigg begins to give in in installments. First he informs the two ministers Seyß-Inquart and Glaise-Horstenau that he is postponing the election. He asks to communicate this to Göring. In the meantime it is 4 p.m. The two ministers immediately call Göring in Berlin, but Göring is no longer satisfied with a postponement of the election. He dictates the next ultimatum: "The situation can only be saved if the Chancellor resigns immediately and within two hours Dr. Seyß-Inquart is appointed Chancellor. If Mr. Seyß-Inquart is not appointed by 6:30 p.m., the German invasion of Austria will take place one hour later, at 7:30 p.m.". This decision is irrevocable this time." 38 After Seyß-Inquart and Glaise-Horstenau have also conveyed this message to the Chancellor, Chancellor Schuschnigg gives up. He goes to Federal President Miklas to offer his resignation. But the president only approves the postponement of the referendum, which he himself considers a mistake. However, he refuses to dismiss Schuschnigg from his office and appoint Seyß-Inquart in his place. At 5:26 p.m. Göring now calls Vienna on his own initiative to inquire about the state of affairs. When he hears that the Federal President does not give in, he sends Seyß-Inquart this time accompanied by the German military attache to the Federal President. The Attache recites Goering's demands and the ultimatum once again. But the president does not want to accept Interior Minister Seyß-Inquart as the new chancellor. He hastily summons the president of the Austrian Supreme Court of Audit and offers him the government. But he refuses. The next to come is the Inspector General of the Army. He too refuses to accept the office of chancellor. In the meantime, it was almost half past six in the evening. Goering calls Vienna again. While Goering and Seyß-Inquart are still talking, President Miklas dismisses the chancellor and the cabinet, but without appointing a new chancellor. During another conversation at 8:00 p.m., Seyß-Inquart informs Göring that the Inspector General has ordered the troops to withdraw and that Austria's leaders are now apparently waiting for the invasion. Goering replies that he will now order the invasion, and he urges Seyß-Inquart to then take power in the country. Shortly after 8 o'clock in the evening, ex-Chancellor Schuschnigg announces over the radio that he has resigned with the cabinet. Thus, that night and on the day of the German invasion of Austria, no one knows who is in charge in the country. In the meantime, all of Austria is a single witch's cauldron. Since Chancellor Schuschnigg lifted the party bans three days ago, Marxists, Social Democrats, National Socialists, the National Opposition, legalists loyal to the Habsburg government, trade unions, the Heimwehr and the Heimatschutz have been demonstrating and marching on foot and in convoys of trucks through the streets of all the major cities. In many places, the police and the army cordoned off squares and public buildings with barbed wire and demonstratively placed machine guns. In the bustle of people in the streets, one hears the slogans "Heil Moscow," "Heil Schuschnigg," "Nieder mit Schuschnigg," "Heil Hitler," "Nieder mit Hitler," "Es lebe Österreich," "Es lebe Deutschland," and so on. The flags, too, ranging from red-white-

red to hammer and sickle to swastika, show the momentary disunity of the Austrian population. The pro-government press never tires of calling a vote for the Anschluss a betrayal of Austria, while the deputy of the Minister of the Interior calls on the people to boycott the referendum via radio. A picture similar to that of the GDR in its final days, with some people celebrating the GDR's 40th anniversary by the thousands with torches and parades and proclaiming that the Wall will still be standing in 100 years, while others also hold prayer services by the thousands and chant "We are one people" at Monday demonstrations. That night, the tide turns. Ex-Chancellor Schuschnigg announced his resignation over the radio. Shortly afterwards, Seyß-Inquart, now only the caretaker Minister of the Interior, also calls on the population to remain calm via radio. Suddenly the police in Vienna are wearing armbands with the swastika. The anti-annexation demonstrations disappear as if from now on. Instead, a motorcade with swastika flags and flares on the cars moves through downtown Vienna. Chants in front of the Ballhaus shout "Long live the new Austria!" and people demand "Seyß-Inquart on the balcony!" At this time, Seyß-Inquart has still not been installed as the new Chancellor. Since this is also obviously no longer to be expected, Hitler orders at 8:45 p.m. the entry of the troops marched up on Austria's borders. Only a little later, Minister Göring tries to persuade Seyß-Inquart to officially request an invasion by German troops³⁹. 39 IMT Documents, Volume XXXI, Document 2949-PS/l 1 111 But the Austrian minister, who still had in mind to carry out the Anschluss by legal means after the election decision had been made, did not do Göring the favor. At about 11 p.m., Federal President Miklas Seyß-Inquart appoints the new head of the Austrian government after all. In the morning hours of the new day - it is now Saturday, March 12, 1938 - German army troops march towards Salzburg, Linz and Innsbruck. Flower decorations and flags on the military vehicles are supposed to show that this is a reunification after long years of German separation and not a campaign of conquest. This sign is also understood in this way. The Austrian population on both sides of the roads reacts first friendly, then soon with increasing enthusiasm. There are hugs, waving, handshakes, tears of joy, flag waving. When Hitler's motorcade rolled into the marketplace of the city of Linz in the evening, 60,000 people were already waiting there for the reception. Hitler gave a short speech and was interrupted again and again by storms of applause. The enthusiasm of the crowd leaves a deep impression on him, who until then could not be sure of the undivided approval of the Austrians. Chancellor Seyß-Inquart, freshly sworn in by the Austrian President, and some of the newly appointed federal ministers came to Linz to greet Hitler. Seyß-Inquart, still no friend of the invasion, suggests to Hitler that Austrian troops also be sent to the German Reich to show all the world that a voluntary unification is taking place here and not a unilateral conquest. Hitler is taken with the suggestion and immediately orders to proceed in this way. Already the next day, Austrian troops marched to Munich, Dresden, Stuttgart and Berlin.⁴⁰ Until Linz, Hitler obviously had no political concept for this invasion, which had not been planned until three days before. Thus, it is not yet clear to him in what way Austria is now to be annexed to the "old empire". Hitler himself, surprised by the

Hitler, who was surprised by the sudden course of events, obviously only had in mind to co-govern Austria as a separate state in personal union⁴¹ until the overwhelming reception that the Austrians gave him in Linz. In Linz, he decided to annex Austria to the "old empire" as a new part of the Reich. Also, Hitler can still decide whether he waits for the result of the now postponed referendum and leaves it to Seyß-Inquart to carry out the annexation, or whether he himself creates facts beforehand. The crowds in Linz and the enthusiasm of the people encouraged Hitler to do the latter. Sunday morning, March 13, 1938, at 1 a.m., the first Wehrmacht unit rolls into Austria's capital, Vienna. The streets are packed with people despite the night and cold. In front of the opera house, an Austrian music corps has 40 IMT-Verhandlungen, Band XV, Seite 664 ff ⁴¹ v. Weizsäcker-Papiere, Seite 124 ¹¹² arrived and receives the first German troops for an impromptu military parade. The police barriers designed to separate the

people from the marching Wehrmacht companies soon collapse under the onslaught of the enthusiastic crowd. At 2:30 a.m., the first battalion of the Wehrmacht arrives at the Rennweg barracks, where it is met by the 3rd Vienna Infantry Regiment with honorary company, flag and music. A similar picture appears when German troops arrive at the border crossings to Italy and Yugoslavia. There, too, the Wehrmacht troops are received with ceremonial by the Italian and Yugoslavian border troops. The military invasion takes place as if the political annexation of Austria had already preceded it. But Seyß-Inquart is still chancellor and Miklas president of Austria. Towards evening, however, Miklas declares his resignation from the office of Federal President. Thus, according to the current constitution, Article 77, the powers of the President are transferred to the Federal Chancellor. Thus, for a very short time, Seyß-Inquart is head of government and head of state in one. Already in the morning of that day, Seyß-Inquart as Federal Chancellor, Glaise-Horstenau as Vice-Chancellor and Justice Minister Hueber had drafted and signed a new "Federal Constitutional Law", which reads: "Article I Austria is a country of the German Reich. Article II Sunday, April 10, 1938, a free and secret referendum of the German men and women of Austria over 20 years of age shall be held on reunification with the German Reich. ... Article V This Federal Constitutional Law shall enter into force on the day of its promulgation.... Vienna, March 13, 1938 Seyß-Inquart, Federal Chancellor Glaise-Horstenau, Vice-Chancellor 42 Hueber, Minister of Justice" 42 As the Reich German counterpart to this, Adolf Hitler signs the "Law on the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich. The articles read, "Article I The Federal Constitutional Law on the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich of March 13, 1938, passed by the Austrian Federal Government, hereby becomes German Reich law. 42 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 5, page 285 113 (The text of the Austrian law follows) Article II The law currently in force in Austria shall remain in force until further notice. The introduction of Reich law in Austria shall be effected by the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor or by the Reich Ministers authorized by him to do so. ... Article IV The law shall enter into force on the day of its promulgation. Linz, March 13, 1938 Adolf Hitler." 43 Thus, on the evening of March 13, 1938, the political annexation of Austria to the German Reich was accomplished in only a few short steps. First, as mentioned, Federal President Miklas clears the way by resigning. Then Seyß-Inquart, as acting president, promulgated the "Federal Constitutional Law" in Vienna and, according to Article V of the law, immediately put it into effect. Austria thus declares itself part of the German Reich and recognizes the German sovereignty to enact laws for Austria as well. As a final step, Reich Minister Goebbels promulgates the "Law on the Reunification of Austria with the German Reich" in Berlin, which now also applies to Austria. Austria is thus declared part of the Reich from the German side as well, and Hitler has become head of state and head of government for this part of the Reich as well. But the Anschluss lacks the legitimacy of the election, which is not scheduled until April 10, 1939. Since the beginning of the Dollfuß dictatorship five years ago, there have been no federal elections in Austria. Thus, for the time being, it is unclear how those who have not championed the Anschluss in recent years, such as the "National Opposition" and the National Socialists of Austria, will decide in the referendum. It is quite possible that churches, trade unions, monarchists, socialists and Marxists will not vote for Germany but against the National Socialist Party of Austria. The risk that Hitler and Seyß-Inquart were taking with this election was therefore not small. But already on the day of the Anschluss, the consistory of the Protestant Church professed its support for the annexation to the German Reich in a letter to the congregations. The letter reads: "The Evangelical Church of German Austria stands unanimously and resolutely, full of joy, in the historic hour that leads the German people of Austria back into the community of life and destiny of the German Reich...." 44 43 Reich Law Gazette 1938/1, page 237, No. 21 44 German News Office of March 14, 1938 114 Fig. 3: The Viennese at the Prince Eugene Monument on Hitler's arrival on March 15, 1938 115 A week later, the Catholic bishops wrote a

pastoral letter on the referendum: "From our innermost conviction and with free will, we bishops of the Austrian Church Province declare on the occasion of the great historical events in German Austria: ... On the day of the plebiscite it is a self-evident national duty for us bishops to profess our allegiance as Germans to the German Reich, and we also expect all believing Christians to know what they owe to their people." 45 On April 3, a week before the referendum, the first post-war Federal Chancellor, Dr. Renner, declared in an interview in the NEUE WIENER TAGEBLATT: "As a Social Democrat and thus as an advocate of the right of nations to self-determination, as the first Chancellor of the Republic of German Austria and as a former president of its peace delegation to Saint-Germain, I will vote YES." 46 Even before legitimation through an election, foreign countries also take a stand. The governments in London and Paris both recognize the annexation as early as April 2, and Mussolini compares it to the unification of Italy in 1856. Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain has thus also fallen. The referendum scheduled for April 10 becomes a confirmation of the Austrian constitutional fathers of 1918 and a triumph for those who wanted an Anschluss. Out of 4,284,795 voters, 4,273,884 vote for the reunification of Austria and Germany and 9,852 against⁴⁷. That is 99.73% pro Anschluss⁴⁸. In the German "Altreich" a referendum on the same subject takes place on the same day. Here, 99.08% of the votes are in favor of an Anschluss. The Germans in Austria and in the so-called "Altreich", as this election shows, are united on that April 10, 1938 by what constitutes the nation: the same language and culture, the common history, the consciousness of belonging together and the will to belong together. At this point, it is necessary once again to look back into history. In October 1848 in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, the German National Assembly was faced with the question of whether Germany should in future become a "Little Germany" without Austria or a "Greater Germany" that included the German principalities of Habsburg. The decision was made in favor of "Kleindeutschland" when the Reich was unified in 1871. 90 years after the Paulskirchen⁴⁵ IMT Documents, Vol. XL, page 159 46 IMT Documents, Vol. XL, Document Neurath-130, page 523 47 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 5, page 309 48 Jews and other groups are excluded from the vote, however, which puts the 99% somewhat in perspective. 116 Assembly, the people of Austria and Germany decide in the referendum of April 10, 1938 for the annexation of Austria to the German Reich. This also puts the name "Greater Germany" back on the agenda. The German Reich, including Austria, is therefore also called the "Greater German Reich" from 1938 onwards, in memory of 1848. This is a historical reference and not an expression of German grandmannism. With the annexation of Austria in 1938, two things are repeated which already occurred with the return of the Saarland in 1935 and with the reoccupation of the previously unprotected Rhineland border in 1936. In the case of Austria and the Saarland, the opponents of the Anschluss linked their aims to a vote against the National Socialists, although both ballots were about quite different things, and then lost the election. The Austrians as well as the Saarlanders voted by a large majority in their elections for the Anschluss to the German Reich and thus apparently for the party that propagated the Anschluss. No one knows how many of the votes cast were primarily for the Anschluss and how many were primarily because of the party. Thus Hitler emerges victorious both times even with the votes of the Social Democrats, the centrists, the Christian Socialists, and all the others. The Allied Powers, who in both cases in Versailles and Saint-Germain deliberately broke the right of self-determination of peoples deliberately broke the right of self-determination of peoples, prepared Hitler's way in this respect as well. The second parallel can be seen in the annexation of Austria and in the reoccupation of the Rhineland, which had been denuded by the German military. In both cases, the German generals warn that the next step they plan to take will provoke foreign countries. The generals are convinced that England, France, Czechoslovakia, and Poland will not tolerate the breaches of the Versailles, Locarno, and Saint-Germain treaties and will invade Germany. In both cases Hitler better estimates the reaction

of foreign countries, and both times he is right. The result is that Hitler's self-confidence increases, and his confidence in the judgment of military advisors diminishes. This, too, will later be Germany's undoing. The victorious states of World War I view this annexation of Austria to the German Reich with apprehension and concern. With this step, post-war Germany stands as strong as before 1914. The Versailles and Saint-Germain regulations on Austria's eternal independence from Germany have been rescinded without France, England and the United States even being asked for their opinion, let alone their consent, on the matter. Thus the victors of the First World War put the annexation of Austria in 1938 on the Germans in 1945. In the Nuremberg Trials, they accused the Reich government of annexing Austria as a breach of law and conquest. For the Germans in Austria and in the "old empire" the annexation looks different. They realize with it what had already been attempted in 1848 in the Paulskirche 117. They are putting into practice what Wilson conceded in 1917 with the right of self-determination of the peoples, what was agreed in the German-Austrian Unification Treaty of November 1918, what was a constitutional objective of the first constitutions of the new republics of Austria and Germany in 1918 and 1919, and what the people in both parts of Greater Germany have now impressively confirmed in a referendum: the reunification of the Germans. Stresa, Abyssinia and the Rome-Berlin Axis What does the whale-whale oasis have to do with the capital Vienna? Both are settings in the same stage play, described in the previous chapter only with its Austrian and German actors. But in the same play, the British, the French, the Abyssinians and the Italians also play major roles. In 1915, when Britain, France, and Russia try to persuade Italy to change sides from its alliance with Austria and Germany, they offer the Italians South Tyrol, Istria, Dalmatia, western Albania, the protectorate over central Albania, the islands of the Dodecanese, and an enlargement of the Italian colonial empire in exchange for their arms aid in case the German colonies should fall to Britain or France after the war. This extensive war gain was promised to Italy in writing in the Treaty of London on April 26, 1915.⁴⁹ After the war, London and Paris shared the German colonies in Africa, and Rome came away virtually empty-handed as far as the promised expansion of its colonial possessions was concerned. Southern Albania also did not become part of the Kingdom of Italy, as had been promised in 1915. After the First World War, the Italians therefore felt cheated of the colonies promised in the Treaty of London, just as the Germans felt cheated of the peace terms of the 14 Wilson points at the same time. Thus Italy finds itself in a less than pleasant position after the war. It cannot be sure that Austria and Germany will permanently abide by the treaties of Saint-Germain and Versailles and forever renounce the German South Tyrol. After all, in 1915 Italy itself did not honor a treaty with Germany and with Austria in spirit when it left the Triple Alliance and defected to Germany's enemies. On the other hand, from now on Italy cannot rely on the British and the French either, because they have just broken the Treaty of London. Thus, in the postwar years, Italy is forced to constantly wade between the interests of the British, the French, the Austrians, and the Germans. ⁴⁹ Wilson Documents, Volume 1, page 52 118 Italy is pressed by two concerns in the postwar period. The first is the already mentioned South Tyrol problem with a native German-speaking population that does not want to become Italian. The Italians see German-Austrian efforts to unify the two countries, and they fear that a unified and once again strong German-Austria might one day reconquer South Tyrol. Thus, the Italian postwar governments are the most strident opponents of an annexation of Austria to the German Reich. The second concern relates to the enormous growth of its own population. Even in the prewar years, five to seven hundred thousand Italians emigrate annually because the country cannot support the growing population. Italy needs colonial space to cope with the population explosion in its own country. In the London Conference of 1915, Italy, in its demand for another colony, had in mind the last country in Africa still free and sovereign, Abyssinia. The country would have offered settlement space and interesting mineral resources. Abyssinia would also have connected Italy's two African colonies of

Somalia and Eritrea in East Africa as a new centerpiece. This is Italy's starting position after the First World War. It wants to keep South Tyrol and gain Abyssinia. England, which had itself conquered colonial possessions in Africa before the world war, which promised Italy colonial acquisitions in 1915 and which annexed more than half of all

German colonies in 1919, changed its attitude with the acquisition of the German African territories. Britain henceforth shifts to securing the spoils, calling it the "preservation of the status quo" and representing its new position at all international conferences from 1920 onward as the "securing of peace." The expression "securing the spoils" would have been more honest. France's greatest concern after the World War is the defeated yet still intact German Empire. So the French governments try to keep the loyalty of the great powers England and Italy against Germany. However, this becomes difficult from now on, as both states come into conflict and therefore seek Germany's proximity themselves. At this time, Germany is mainly pressed by its economic worries. In addition, the empire also tries to solve the problem of open borders and the lack of defense capability. And thirdly, the Reich governments are still trying to initiate the annexation of Austria. Until 1933, this was still the wish of the governments in Berlin and Vienna in the same way. When the two German countries attempt to establish a customs union in 1931, they encounter vehement resistance from the Italians and the French. Italy is afraid of a German Empire that would reach as far as the Brenner Pass and thus the South Tyrolean borders, and France fears an increase in power of its German neighbor. In 1931, the governments in Paris and Rome thwart the 119 Map 8: Italian Colonies Erythrea, Ital. Somalia and, from 1936, Abyssinia German-Austrian Customs Union. In 1933, the dictatorship of Chancellor Dollfuss began in Austria, thus ending the desire from Vienna for an annexation. Thus Austria finds itself unexpectedly in the camp of the French and the Italians. Austria, hitherto Germany's partner, now seeks Italy's protection against further German pressure. Italy, with its patronage over Austria, can count on Vienna not making any more demands for South Tyrol in the future, and also on Austria keeping the German Reich at a distance. France can henceforth again count on Italy as an opponent of Germany, and Italy can make this pay with France's backing in Abyssinia. In the period that followed, France, Italy, England and Austria stood closely together in the defense against German requests for annexation. On February 17 and September 27, 1934, France, England and Italy issued two joint declarations of guarantee for Austria's independence from Germany. On March 17 of the same year, Italy and Austria, and in its wake Hungary as well, concluded a consultation treaty by which they agreed to coordinate their foreign policies. And on January 7, 1935, the prime ministers of France and Italy signed the "Treaties of Rome," in which they pledged for a third time to defend Austria against German annexation requests. Otherwise, the treaties delineate the interests of both states in the colonies. In a secret military treaty that follows the Treaty of Rome, the French also give the Italians a free hand in Abyssinia⁵⁰. Last but not least, on April 12, 1935, representatives of England, France and Italy meet in Stresa on the shores of Lake Maggiore to guarantee Austria's security once again. Historians refer to this, for the time being, last agreement of the three countries against Germany as the "Stresa Front". At the Stresa conference, England, France and Italy talk about a threat to Austria that does not exist at the time, and they pass over in silence a dispute over Abyssinia that has been interposed between the previous partners, England and Italy, since December 1934. Since World War I, the Italians have believed that they were not hurting English or French interests with their Abyssinia ambitions, but they were mistaken in this respect. Between 1925

and 1934, Italy attempts to build a rail link between its colonies of Eritrea and Somalia through Abyssinia in agreement with Abyssinia and England. London agrees and makes it pay by securing the former German oil concessions in Iraq. The Abyssinian government also initially agrees to this by contract, but it does not honor the agreement. In 1934, border disputes arose between Italy and

Abyssinia and, as a result, also between Rome and London. In the fall of 34, the Abyssinian emperor Haile Selassie claims the Whale-Whale Oasis in the borderland between Italian Somalia and Abyssinia. The border there had never been accurately recorded on maps before. Italy had taken possession of the oasis five years ago and had since settled and fortified it. Italy refused to hand it over. As a result, Abyssinian troops captured Wal-Wal, the oasis on the border, on December 5, 1934. Italy reacts by transferring four infantry battalions to Somalia, which England interprets as the prelude to Italy's conquest of Abyssinia. Thus the wheel of change in Europe begins to turn anew. The partnerships from World War I break, and at the end of the development around Abyssinia, Italy is on Germany's side. Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 4, Page 115-121. Thus, four years later, Austria can become part of the German Empire and with it the capital Vienna. The Abyssinian crisis smolders and burns from whale-whale in December 1934 until the Italians conquer Addis Ababa in May 1936. In the spring and summer of 1935, Italy moves 170,000 Alpine troops, infantry and cavalry to the borders of Abyssinia. England, unwilling to tolerate Italy's rise to power in Africa, assembles a fleet of 134 warships in the Mediterranean, and Prime Minister MacDonald declares that the world is on the brink of war as it was in 1914. The Italian press reacts indignantly to England's veto stance, recalling the broken promises of 1915 and England's own colonial acquisitions in India and, more recently, in Oranje and Transvaal. On October 3, 1935, Italy's troops invade still-free Abyssinia. England mobilizes the League of Nations. Almost 50 member states declare Italy the aggressor and impose an embargo and sanctions as punishment. Germany, which is not a member of the League of Nations, seizes the opportunity to break Italy out of the Stresa Front. Hitler offers Mussolini four million tons of hard coal to replace the canceled supplies from England for quite some time. Now France is getting into trouble. It needs both England and Italy against Germany, which has been recognizably rebuilding its Wehrmacht for a year. England has been pursuing a course of détente with Germany since the 1935 naval agreement. And now the pressure of the League of Nations embargo is also forcing the Italians to move closer to the Germans. England wants to supplement the embargo against Italy with an oil supply stop. France, however, was able to prevent this, and with it a final swing of the Italians toward the Germans. But this can no longer be prevented in the following year. Hitler's coal offer has an effect. As early as January 1936, Mussolini let the German ambassador in Rome know that he had no objection to Austria becoming a formally independent satellite state of the German Reich⁵¹. The next blow for France follows in March. Hitler allowed German troops to march into the Rhineland. Now France demands sanctions against Germany at the League of Nations. England, which does not feel threatened by the reentry of German troops into the Rhineland, now refuses to comply with the French requests for sanctions. The last embargo demands of England against Italy and the new sanctions demands of the French against Germany overlap and block each other in favor of Germany and Italy. On May 9, 1936, the last Abyssinian troops surrender, and Mussolini proclaims the "Imperium Romanum" in Rome. The King of Italy Victor Emmanuel II assumes the title of Emperor of Abyssinia. Mussolini now believes he no longer needs German help. He now tries to regain his distance from Hitler and instead to draw closer to France. Immediately after his war of conquest in Abyssinia, he feels called to defend Czechoslovakia and Austria against Germany. Mussolini rediscovered his old interest in keeping the Germans away from the Brenner Pass, and he sent a proposal to the French government to conclude a military pact against Germany⁵². He offers France rights of passage through Italy if it wants to send troops against Germany into Czechoslovakia. In return, he demands France's arms assistance if Italy should "protect" Austria against Germany, and he wants recognition of the Kingdom of Italy's rule over Abyssinia. Mussolini's offer comes at the wrong time and comes to nothing. On June 4, 1936, France's left-wing parties form a Popular Front government that immediately takes up the fight against fascism. Thus the French door is permanently slammed shut on Mussolini. The U.S. and England also refuse to

recognize Italy's conquest of Abyssinia under international law. Thus, this recognition remains the first goal of Roman foreign policy in the years to come. And Mussolini is now isolated. He must look for new friends. Austria still has ties with Italy, but Austria's relationship with Germany has been ruined since the death of Chancellor Dollfuß. Détente between Rome and Berlin would certainly be strained by German-Austrian disgruntlement. So Mussolini urges Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg to reconcile with the Germans. The result of this good advice from Rome is the aforementioned "German-Austrian Agreement on Normalization and Friendly Relations" of July 11, 1936. Thus, Mussolini's Abyssinia adventure indirectly opens the way to Austria's later annexation to the German Reich. On October 24, 1936, the "Duce" Mussolini had his foreign minister Count Ciano ask the "Führer" Hitler and his foreign minister von Neurath how far the interests of the two states fit together. On November 1, they learn the result. Mussolini officially swings from the camp of the World War I victors to the camp of the former

World War II opponent Germany. The "Duce" makes a public speech in Milan that day, proclaiming the "Rome-Berlin Axis." He invites all other states to participate in this axis. Thus the two hitherto isolated states of Italy and Germany became a team for the next eight years, with advantages and disadvantages for both "Axis powers. 52 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 4, p. 192 123 In March 1938, when Austria's chancellor Schuschnigg tried to get Mussolini's backing for his referendum against the Anschluss, Mussolini only gave him the cold shoulder. Italy now accepts the annexation to the German Reich, which it had tried for years to prevent with France's help. Germany's coal aid during the League of Nations embargo and German recognition of the Italian Empire of Abyssinia bear fruit. The unification of the two German-speaking states, the German Empire and Austria, considering Italy's part in it, took its long run-up in whale-whale. The next annexation, in which Mussolini is the godfather, is that of the Sudetenland to the German Reich. But before the annexation of the Sudetenlande and the subjugation of the Czech Republic become the subject of discussion, it is necessary to take a look at a power in the background: the USA, which so far seems to have had no part in the changes in Europe. America in the Background A not unimportant player in the changes in Europe since 1933 has been American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, even if he is still pulling the strings from the background. In 1915, at the age of 33, Roosevelt was Undersecretary of State in the U.S. Department of the Navy. Even then, two years before America declared war on Germany, the young Roosevelt urged U.S. President Wilson to go to war against Germany. Then Wilson teaches him a lesson: "I will tell them something that I cannot say publicly. Not only do I want to show before history that we have used every diplomatic means to keep out of the war, and to show that the war was deliberately forced upon us by Germany, but I want to be able to go before the court of history with clean hands." 53 After World War I, Roosevelt did not depart from his conviction that the Kaiser and the Germans alone were to blame for this great war. Since 1921, the United States of North America has been neutral. But although the three presidents after World War I kept the United States out of all the wars of Asia and Europe, a new way of thinking has been taking hold in the States for some time. Alongside widespread isolationism, a new interventionism is slowly but surely gaining ground. This is based on the conviction that democracy and the rights and freedoms of the Indi 53 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's War, page 49 124 viduum are values of general validity that outweigh the sovereign right of states to determine their own nature and the lives of their citizens, both internally and externally. Roosevelt also subscribes to this conviction, and therefore feels called upon to

Roosevelt, who felt called upon to export America's values to the world, even by means of war if necessary. This liberal-democratic internationalism of many Americans finds a parallel in the contemporaneous Marxist-Leninist internationalism insofar as both are convinced that they represent the welfare of mankind and both have a hidden readiness for war. Roosevelt's relationship with the

Germans since World War I is also significant. The United States played a decisive role in shaping the postwar global order at the Versailles, Trianon, and Saint-Germain conferences. But its claim, introduced at that time, for the right of self-determination of peoples, for the enforcement of democracy in foreign states, for freedom of the seas in peace and in war, and for a lasting peace did not fully prevail either in the victorious conferences or in the postwar period. So Roosevelt, since he became President in 1933, has been trying to realize this dream of Americans after all. Roosevelt has defended the penalties of the Versailles Treaty against Germany as just all his life, and he has demanded that they be further enforced. The right of self-determination of the "separated" Germans is of little interest to him. His relationship to principles puzzles in other respects as well. In his struggle for democracy and human rights, for example, he vehemently deplores the human rights violations of which the German Reich government is guilty. In contrast, the persecutions, expulsions and murders of members of the former upper class in Russia and of large farmers, officers and party functionaries, of which he is also aware, apparently touch him little. The mass "liquidation of class enemies" in the Soviet Union and the human rights violations in Poland and Czechoslovakia do not challenge him. He reinterprets the despotically ruled Soviet Union as a transitional phenomenon to a later social and just social order. That the German degenerated national socialism is the competing design of the dictator Hitler to the somewhat older and already before degenerated Russian socialism of the dictators Lenin and Stalin remains closed to Roosevelt. It is also hard to fathom the different assessment the president makes of the German Reich and Poland. In the later dispute over Danzig and over an extraterritorial transport link between East Prussia, which had been separated from the Reich since 1920, Roosevelt was undoubtedly on Poland's side. He was not primarily concerned with protecting the state of Poland. Otherwise, he would certainly have taken a closer look at this country, which was also run in an authoritarian manner and was aggressive and anti-Jewish towards its neighbors until very recently. Nor is he concerned with the plight of the Jewish population in Germany. Otherwise he would have had to put the Poles in their place in the same Wei 125 se as the Germans. After all, the number of protest letters addressed to the U.S. Congress between 1933 and 1937 because of anti-Jewish measures in Poland exceeds the number of the same complaints from the German Reich many times over⁵⁴. The American president's sole concern was to preserve the order that the United States had helped to create at Versailles. Roosevelt made this unmistakably clear immediately after Hitler's assumption of power. Immediately after taking office, he himself ordered the construction of 20 destroyers and two aircraft carriers for the fleet and insisted that Germany's armaments should remain at the low level set at Versailles⁵⁵. The entry of German troops into the Rhineland also infuriates the president. For Roosevelt, further revisions of the postwar Versailles order without U.S. participation and approval would be a dismantling of the claim to power and leadership he felt here. Roosevelt's concern for a more democratic, just, and secure world did not revolve around Germany alone. His harsh reactions, which the German Reich was drawn into from 1937 onward, had their origins first in Japan and Italy. Neither was compensated with war profits after World War I as they had been promised before entering the war, and both countries are now no longer allies. Japan and Italy are fighting for equality with England, France, and the United States, and they are vying for wealth, living space, and colonies. Japan conquered Manchuria in 1931 and turned it into a vassal state under its own suzerainty. Italy swallows Abyssinia in 1936. Roosevelt now begins to use his resources against both states. He has the tariffs on Japan's main export, textile products, increased by 42%⁵⁶ and he solicits an embargo against the Kingdom of Italy from all states. The consequences are that Japan's efforts to increase its foreign economic independence from the West increase, and that Italy joins the German Empire. Germany also arouses presidential suspicion at this time. The withdrawal from the League of Nations, the economic upswing, the rearmament, and the deployment of German troops in 1936 to the hitherto unprotected Rhineland show Roosevelt that a new force is growing here

at the heart of Europe, following its own laws. Even before Hitler made any external demands, Germany had become a danger to the president. Although the United States had committed itself to neutrality with a whole series of laws since 1921, Roosevelt began to fight Germany, Japan and Italy with various means and methods from about 1936. Beginning in 1937, 54 Congressional Record. House of Representatives Minutes of July 9, 1937, quoted in Hoggan, page 813 55 Roosevelt's demand to Reichsbank President Schacht on May 6, 1933. See Tansill, page 63 56 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Road to War, page 224 126 delt he introduce U.S. participation in the next war, always hard on the edge of the law. He makes use of economic means, which are abundantly at his disposal: Punitive tariffs, currency controls, freezes on foreign assets, and export embargoes on vital goods. And Roosevelt begins to publicly and "officially" outlaw the three aforementioned states. On October 5, 1937, the president delivers a speech in Chicago that reverberates and gains notoriety as the "Quarantine Speech." In this speech, Roosevelt laments that "the reign of terror and international lawlessness" has taken forms that threaten the "foundations of civilization." He refers to Japan's war with China, Italy's conquest of Abyssinia, and Germany's unilateral disengagement from the Treaty of Versailles. The president concludes that America, too, could one day become the target of such attacks. To prevent such, Roosevelt says -: "all peace-loving nations would have to make a concentrated effort toward those nations which are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no way out but by mere isolation and neutrality. The opposition of all peace-loving nations, he said, must take the form of a quarantine which isolates the disturbers of peace." 57 With the

"Quarantine Speech" Roosevelt sketches out the main features of his policy for the next few years. These are the differentiation of peoples into peace-loving and unpeaceful nations, the ostracism and isolation of these negative peoples, the spreading of fears of the unpeaceful, the abrogation of U.S. neutrality, and the demand that all peace-lovers stand with America. A differentiated view of the problems of the Germans, Italians and Japanese has as little room in this policy as the neutrality of other states. Thus, Roosevelt began quite early to classify Germany among the rogue states and to strategically prepare America for the next world war. The behavior of the Japanese gives him an entry point for this. Since July 1937, Japanese troops have been advancing again into East China, where they encounter American interests. The U.S. maintains in China not only banks, industrial plants, missions, hospitals, schools, and commercial and shipping enterprises, but also warships on the rivers, and it is building the Chinese modern air forces. England has also stationed gunboats on the rivers in China. On December 12, 1937, an incident occurs in which Japanese dive-bombers attack American and British gunboats on the Yangtze River near Nanking⁵⁸, apparently believing that they are Chinese ships. In the process, the U.S. gunboat "Panay" 57 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's War, page 127 58 Nanking is the capital of the Republic of China at the time 127 is sunk. The Japanese government apologizes in Washington and pays for the damage caused⁵⁹. Although the warships of the neutral United States have no business in a war zone at the time, and although President Roosevelt remains committed to a policy of neutrality under current law, he uses the opportunity to hammer in the first nail for the later wars against Japan, Germany, and Italy. Shortly after the Panay incident, still in December 1937, he sends the head of the U.S. Navy's War Planning Division, Captain to the Sea Ingersoll, to London to have initial discussions held about later cooperation between the U.S. and Royal Navies⁶⁰. Roosevelt thus became involved in the strategic considerations and planning of the British. From now on, London could count on the United States being on its side in the event of a confrontation with the Japanese in the Pacific, with the Italians in the Mediterranean or with the Germans in the North Atlantic. The

The prospect of support from the U.S. as a naval power strengthens England's freedom of action to assert its own interests, even at the risk of war if necessary. Less than a year later, Roosevelt continued along this path. In August and September 1938, he made an informal promise of protection⁶¹ first to

Canada and then to England, although neither country had been threatened or attacked by anyone until then and although Congress had not authorized him to do so. Another of Roosevelt's moves worth mentioning here is his "World Peace Plan,"⁶² with which he attempts to muster an alliance of the "world community" for peace. At first, the President opened his plan only to the British Prime Minister Chamberlain, to whom he wrote a top-secret letter on January 12, 1938. This date is before the time when Hitler demands the annexation of Austria and the Sudeten Germans. Roosevelt obviously pursues two quite different purposes with the World Peace Plan. He wants to establish the USA as the first power on earth and his plan is to tame Italy and Germany. The matter fails because the English Prime Minister Chamberlain sees through Roosevelt and senses the danger to England that the plan contains. The American president proposes to the English prime minister on that January 12 in the secret letter a peculiar procedure for his intention. He wants to invite in parallel ten selected small states to a conference under his direction in Washington, and at the same time to discuss his new world peace and economic order in separate negotiations successively with England, France, Italy, and Germany. The result of the conferences should then be sent to all other states of the world and recommended for signature. 59 Dupuy and Dupuy, page 1124 60 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's War, page 149 61 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's War, page 342 62 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Road to War, pages 285 ff 128

With this complicated kind of direction, Roosevelt would have had absolute dominance. The ten minor powers would have had virtually no weight next to the world power, the United States, and the four major powers would have had no chance to form an alliance in their own favor and protect their own interests during the separate talks. But that is not the only point Chamberlain refuses to accept. There are four others. The first is that the conferences should also negotiate free access for all states to all trade zones and sources of raw materials on earth. Here England would have had to make concessions in her colonies. The second is that Roosevelt already in his letter reserves the "freedom from political entanglements". This can only mean that the U.S. itself would not have to abide by its new world peace and economic order in an emergency. The third is that Roosevelt expresses that he wants "wholehearted support" but no proposed additions. And the fourth point of disturbance is the deadline. Roosevelt demands reply in only five days. Chamberlain rejects this "world peace plan" by letter of January 13. The Roosevelt world peace plan though failed is the attempt to move the U.S. from the place of first violinist to the conductor's podium. The President's claim to shape a new world peace and world economic order virtually single-handedly permits this conclusion. Second, the plan is an attempt to open up the colonial markets and resources of other states to the United States. The way in which the plan was discussed in advance only with the British shows an effort to turn England from an economic and maritime strategic competitor into a leashed ally. And third, the plan lies in the train of quarantine policy. Roosevelt, with the resolutions of ten small states and the consent of the British and French, could have forced the Germans and the Italians to accept America's rules or to place themselves, for all to see, outside the "community of states." Thus, Roosevelt staked a claim to leadership outside his own country, even though Congress at home continued to insist on U.S. neutrality. He has also arranged the new British-American brotherhood in arms for a next war even before Hitler demands Austria's annexation. And he gives the two informal promises of protection to Canada and England at the very time when the German Reich government is struggling with England, France and Italy over the German affiliation and future of the Sudeten German citizens in Czechoslovakia. 129 The annexation of the Sudeten territories and the subjugation of Czechoslovakia The next success of the politician Hitler in bringing German people and German landscapes "home to the Reich" already carries within itself the seeds of the later downfall of the Third Reich. In September 1938, at the "Munich Conference", Hitler succeeded in annexing to Germany, by threat and negotiation, the areas of the Czech Republic where Germans had been living for a long time, namely the Sudetenland. The threat to force the annexation, if

necessary with the Wehrmacht, however, led to a new closing of ranks of the former World War II opponents against Germany. With the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia six months later, Hitler gave these opposing states the reason to take sides with Poland and against Germany in the Danzig question a little later and to spark off another world war from what was originally only a local border conflict between the German Reich and Poland. The Historical Roots of Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia, an artificial state created only in 1919, was assembled after World War I by the victorious powers from parts of the country that had formerly been Austrian, Hungarian, German or Polish. In front of the eternity of almost 1000 years of belonging of the country parts to the mentioned neighboring countries, the only 19 years of Czechoslovakia seem to the governments in Vienna, Budapest, Berlin and Warsaw in 1938 like the lifetime of a mayfly. The new Czechoslovakia lacks the legitimacy that comes from its own history. This may have been one reason why the governments of all neighboring states, including Adolf Hitler, denied the Czechs the right to statehood in 1938 and 39. The double name Czechoslovakia refers to two different peoples or two different parts of the country. The name obscures the fact that in the newly created state the largest peoples are Czechs and Sudeten Germans and not Czechs and Slovaks, and it does not reveal that the new state has three parts of the country and not only two. Carpatho-Ukraine, in the very east of Czechoslovakia, forms a separate territory with its Ruthenian-Ukrainian population. The closely related languages of Czech and Slovak unite Czechs and Slovaks, but history separates them. Next to them are Slovaks and Ruthenians with a common history, but with two different languages. The Czech Republic with its two territories Bohemia and Moravia became dependent on the German Empire very early. After 800, at the time of Charlemagne, Bohemia and Moravia were first obliged to pay tribute to the German emperor. In 929 Bohemia is subjugated for the first time and in 950 finally 130 Map 9: Czechoslovakia 1920–1938 by German kings and emperors. From 1041, both parts of the country belong permanently to the German Empire until 1918. During this period, Bohemia, Moravia and Germany become entangled through a variety of political connections. In 1086 the German Emperor confers the royal dignity on the Duke of Bohemia. As early as 1257, the Bohemian king joins the six German princes who have the right to elect the German king, who usually becomes the German emperor thereafter, as the seventh elector. In 1310, the German House of Luxembourg acquired the Kingdom of Bohemia through the marriage of John of Luxembourg to Elisabeth, heiress to the Bohemian crown. With Emperor Charles IV, King Wenceslas and Emperor Sigismund, three kings of Bohemia from this line became kings and emperors of the German Empire themselves. In their time, Prague serves as the "capital" of Germany for not quite a hundred years. In 1526 Bohemia and Moravia fall by inheritance to the House of Habsburg, where they remain until 1918. Thus, the territory of today's Czech Republic, and with it the Czech nation, has been under German rule for almost 1000 years, as part of the German Empire for almost 500 years, and in the possession of the House of Habsburg for over 400 years. The attachment of the Czechs to the Habsburg Empire is still so strong in 1917 that the Czech deputies of the Vienna Imperial Council protest when the English and French governments, at the request of U.S. President Wilson, proclaim the liberation of the Czechs and Slovaks from Habsburg as one of their war aims. They declare in writing: "In view of the Allied reply to President Wilson, in which the liberation of the Czechs is mentioned as a war aim, we reject this imposition, which is based on quite false assumptions. We declare emphatically that the Czech people are convinced, as they have always been in the past, that they can be sure of a prosperous development only under the scepter of Habsburg and within the Habsburg monarchy."63 However, what the Czechs have long been emphatically demanding for themselves is an autonomous Kingdom of Bohemia with the same status as Hungary within the Habsburg Empire. Adolf Hitler, who grew up in the old Austria and was influenced by it, therefore obviously does not see the Czechs as the independent nation we see them as today. However, the Czechs themselves, despite this centuries-long political,

economic

and cultural integration into the German Reich, the Czechs themselves have preserved their own language and their national identity, which they wanted to assert as a state language and state consciousness in 1919 with the founding of Czechoslovakia and, of course, did not want to lose in 1939. The Czech population of Bohemia and Moravia, on the one hand, made increasing use of the German language in art, business and science until 1918 and gained political influence in parliament and at court in Vienna. For example, from 1916 to 1917 the Czech Count Clam-Martinitz was Austrian prime minister. On the other hand, many Czechs have also felt oppressed by the German Habsburg for centuries. The memory of the religious struggle of the Catholic ruling house of Habsburg against the Czech Hussites and Calvinists in the 15th and 17th centuries lives on in the Czechs' sense of identity as an anti-German attitude into the modern age. Thus, they still perceive the murder of their reformer Jan Hus in 1415 at the Council of Constance as a disdainful breach of promise and a crime committed by the Germans against the Czechs. Hus had been summoned to the council under the assurance of a free return and there, with the consent of the Bohemian king and German emperor Sigismund, he was condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake. A second religious uprising also ended in disaster. In 1618, the Protestant Czech nobility rose up against the Counter-Reformation pursued by the German Emperor Ferdinand II in Bohemia. The uprising ends in 1620 with a defeat of the Czechs in the Battle of the White Mountain near Prague. After that, the nobility lost not only their rights but also their estates, most of which now passed into German hands. How deeply this defeat entered into the historical consciousness of the Czechs was shown in 1925, when the government of Czechoslovakia attempted to restore the property status of the Czechs from 1620 with a land reform. The Slovaks have historically followed a different path. Since 906, Slovakia has been torn between Czech, Hungarian and Polish claims to power, before becoming part of the Hungarian kingdom in 1018, together with 63 Ingrim, Page 95 132 Carpatho-Ukraine. Thus, although different peoples, Slovaks and Ruthenians stood together under the Hungarian crown from 1018 until 1919. It is only when Hungary becomes part of the Habsburg Empire that the Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians come into political contact under this umbrella. The collapse of the Habsburg world empire at the end of the First World War offers exiled Czechs and Slovaks in the USA the chance to demand their own country for Czechs and Slovaks from the victorious powers in Saint-Germain. On May 30, 1918, the representatives of Czech and Slovak exile organizations concluded an agreement in Pittsburg, USA, to jointly establish their own state in the future. In the text of the agreement, the Czechs assure the Slovaks: "Slovakia will have its own administration, parliament and courts. The Slovak language will become the official language in schools, authorities and in public life in general." 64 Hoping for equal rights in the newly created state of Czechoslovakia, the Slovaks bound themselves to the linguistically related Czechs for the next 20 years. The Ruthenians, who call themselves Carpatho-Ukrainians, also end up in the state of the Czechs and Slovaks with a similar agreement concluded by exiled Czechs with exiled Ruthenians in Cleveland USA. According to their ethnicity, they feel themselves to be part of the great Ukrainian people distributed among the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia. After a long period of foreign rule, they aspire to a new all-Ukraine⁶⁵ rather than to the Czechs and Slovaks. Their undisguised desire for a Greater Ukraine brings them suspicion and opposition in Warsaw and Moscow. Czechoslovakia as a multiethnic state In 1938, Czechoslovakia counted not only 6.7 million Czechs but also 3.1 million Germans, 2 million Slovaks, 734 thousand Hungarians, 460 thousand Ruthenians (Ukrainians), 180 thousand Jews, 75 thousand Poles and 240 thousand people of other origin. Thus, the Czechs do not even represent half of the population in their own state. The colorful mixture of peoples is primarily the result of the intention of the World War victors to divide the until then powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire into many states. Thus, people and territories were added to a new state whose population and

territories had never before in history been a single entity, let alone a state. The status of this new state entity is laid down in the Treaties of Saint-Germain, of Trianon and of Versailles 64 ODSUN Documents, page 483 65 The last independent Ukraine had been divided between Russia and Poland in 1667 133 Map 10: The Multiethnic State of Czechoslovakia⁶⁶. The treaties stipulate that each of the aforementioned minorities should receive its internal autonomy in the new Czechoslovakia. On the part of the exiled Czechs, this was also promised. The Czech delegate Eduard Benes communicates this intention to the victorious powers of Versailles as a promise in a note of May 20, 1919, in writing: "The Czechoslovak government intends to organize its state in such a way that it adopts as the basis of nationality rights the principles brought to bear in the constitution of the Swiss Republic, i.e., it wants to make of the Czechoslovak Republic a certain kind of Switzerland." 67 But only the exiled Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians made a covenant to this new foundation of a state⁶⁸. The other ethnic groups landed in this new state unasked, by the dictates of the victorious powers and by the use of force. Already the constitution of the new Czechoslovakia of 1920 does not redeem the promises for autonomy for all minorities. Only the Ruthenians were granted an autonomous territory, the Carpatho-Ukraine, in Article 3. In it, the constitution assures them their own national parliament with the power to enact laws on matters of language, education, religion, and local administration 66 Articles 27 and 53 to 58 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, Articles 27 and 48 to 52 of the Treaty of Trianon, and Articles 27 and 81 to 86 of the Treaty of Versailles 67 Welles, Page 127 68 Czecho-Slovak Emigrant Agreement of May 30, 1918 in Pittsburg (USA) and the Czecho-Ruthenian Agreement of Cleveland (USA) 134. Towards the Slovaks, the Czechs no longer recognize their Pittsburgh promise made in exile and deny them their own national parliament. The Germans, the Hungarians and the Poles are not considered in this respect either. Like the Slovaks, they are protected only by minority articles in the state constitution: "Article 128.2 Differences of religion, creed, denomination or language shall not, within the limits of the general laws, create an obstacle to any citizen of Czechoslovakia in gaining access to the civil service, to offices, to dignities or to the exercise of any trade. Article 128.3 The right to use the mother tongue. Article 131 In towns and districts with a considerable number of citizens speaking a language other than Czech, bilingualism shall prevail in educational institutions." 69 The Sudeten Germans The name of the Sudeten Germans derives from their homeland, the Sudeten, as the mountain ranges around Bohemia and Moravia were called until 1945. The territory of Bohemia and Moravia is taken over after the migration of peoples, after the departure of the Germanic Marcomanni, by the succeeding people of the Slavic Czechs. From 1204 onwards, several generations of Bohemian kings call German peasants, craftsmen and merchants to settle and develop their land, as a result of which the peripheral areas of Bohemia and Moravia and some linguistic islands in the interior become German populated and remain so for over 700 years. The Sudeten Germans, like the Czechs, have been members of the Habsburg Empire there for the last four centuries. So it is natural that after the breakup of Austria-Hungary they initially felt that they belonged to Austria. With the disintegration of the Habsburg monarchy, the fate of the Sudeten Germans seems uncertain for a breath. On October 29, 1918, the deputies of the constituencies in the closed German settlement areas of Bohemia, Northern Moravia and Austrian Silesia proclaim the "Province of German Bohemia" and inform the Vienna National Assembly that the province is to become part of German Austria⁷⁰. On November 21, they sent a note to the American government through Swedish intermediaries, in which they asked for the right of self-determination of the peoples proclaimed by President Wilson⁷¹. 69 Constitution of the Republic of Czechoslovakia of February 29, 1920 70 ODSUN Documents, page 494 71 ODSUN Documents, page 502 135 Map 11: The Sudeten Territories Despite these clear votes, the Sudeten Germans ended up in the state of the Czechs and Slovaks in 1918 through the use of force and in 1919 through the decision of the victorious powers. First the Czechs take advantage of the capitulation of the

Habsburg and German empires and in November 1918 occupy the German-populated areas of Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia up to the crests of the mountains. By November 18, Czech legionnaires marched into the German towns of Aussig, Karlsbad, Troppau, Komotau and Eger, without the German inhabitants of these places being able to prevent it. On March 4, 1919, pro-Austrian demonstrations took place in the above-mentioned towns, expressing the claim to belong to Austria.

Austria. But Czech military shoots into the crowds of demonstrators. 54 dead and a few hundred injured Sudeten Germans cost this victory of the Czechs over their new minority. On June 2, 1919, the victorious powers put their seal on this annexation of the Czechs in Saint-Germain. They presented Austria's first post-war chancellor, Dr. Renner, with the "peace conditions" that annexed the Sudetenland to Czechoslovakia. Dr. Renner leaves no stone unturned. On June 15, he lodges a protest with a note in Saint-Germain, claiming the right of self-determination of peoples proclaimed by U.S. President Wilson also for the Sudeten Germans. He demands a referendum on the future territorial affiliation of the disputed areas. He also invokes the decision of the freely elected deputies of German Bohemia that their constituencies want to become part of German Austria. But the U.S. and France, against England's vote at the Saint-Germain Conference, decide in favor of the Czechs and to the detriment of the Sudeten Germans. They reply to Chancellor Renner – as mentioned earlier – that the right of self-determination does not apply to the defeated and forbid a referendum in the areas where people with German as their mother tongue live. Thus, more than three million Sudeten Germans became citizens of Czechoslovakia against their will in 1919. The values of democracy and self-determination, for the sake of which England, France and the USA had made their men fight before the victory, lost their normative force after the victory. The victory vote of Saint-Germain was mainly the result of the insistence of the Czech exiles on the victorious powers. Masaryk, later the first president of Czechoslovakia, and Benes, later the second president, had good reasons to complete their new state with German Bohemia and the German-inhabited areas of northern and southern Moravia. The first reason lies above all "underground". In the Sudeten territories there are significant iron, coal and oil deposits, silver, lead, mercury and graphite deposits, and based on them a considerable chemical industry, iron and glass works and foundries. It was not until the annexation of the German peripheral areas of Bohemia that the new Czechoslovakia rose from an agricultural to an industrial country. Four-fifths of the new state's industry was located in the territories of the Sudeten Germans. The second reason lies in the topography of the country. Only the inclusion of the German-inhabited edges of Bohemia up to the crest of the Bohemian Forest and the Ore Mountains gives the new country an outer border that can be easily defended in case of war⁷². Thus, more than three million German-speaking citizens from the old Habsburg end up, through the claim of the Czechs and the verdict of the victors, in a country to which they do not want to belong, and which, moreover, does not want them itself. Mineral resources, industry and the rounding off of the territory are what drive the Czechs to claim the Sudetenland for their new state. It is not the people who live there. Since the second half of the 19th century, there has been a current among the Czechs that perceives the Germans in Bohemia as "foreign nationals" and wants to separate from them. This dismissive attitude towards the Sudeten Germans becomes all the stronger as the prospect of a separate state grows. In 1919, after the collapse of Austria-Hungary and before the beginning of the victors' conference in Saint-Germain, this is openly discussed in Czech journalism. In 1919, for example, a Czech jurist named Stihule published a memorandum entitled "The Czechoslovak State in International Law," in which he assessed the position of German Bohemians in his new state as follows: "... The German as an enemy of mankind cannot exercise the right to self-determination according to his selfish needs.....It ⁷² mineral resources, industries, and the strategic value of the border regions are given by Benes in his Memorandum No. 3 in 1919 in the Saint-

German Conference, among others, as justification for the demanded border demarcation. See ODSUN documents, pages 551 ff 137 are the Slavs, at whose expense the German has spread, and this injustice must be righted in the opinion of mankind, i.e. the German people must hand over this territory to its rightful owners.....The Germans living in our state do not form a historical-political individuality which alone can be the bearer of the right to self-determination. They are original colonists ..." 73 Furthermore, Stihule writes about the assimilation of the German Bohemians and about the future fragmentation of the German settlement areas within the new borders. He ends the thought with the sentence, "If this process does not proceed quickly enough, we shall proceed to the expulsion of the German element, if it threatens our state security." Back to the beginning of Czechoslovakia. In 1919, the newly-born nation of Czechs and Slovaks consisted of 48% Czechs, 28% Germans, 14% Slovaks, 7% Hungarians, and 3% Ruthenians. In the first years after its foundation, the new country develops into a central state in the hands of the Czechs. The state apparatus, police and military are predominantly Czech and in no way reflect the proportional representation of the peoples. The economy, schools and administration in the towns and villages, which until then had been purely and predominantly German, are vigorously Czechized against the will of the resident population and also against the guarantees of the constitution. 354 German elementary schools and 47 secondary schools are forced to close⁷⁴, and some 40,000 German civil servants are removed from office. German towns are renamed and given Czech names. Eger becomes Cheb, Aussig becomes Usti and so on. German street names are also exchanged. All German land acquisitions since 1620⁷⁵ are expropriated in a so-called land reform and "restituted" ⁷⁶ to the Czech population. The reform also includes the division of the large estates in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, with 43% of the redistributed land by then in German hands, 42% owned by Hungarians, and only 15% of the expropriation affecting Czechs. The provisions of the Saint-Germain and Trianon Treaties to develop Czechoslovakia into a federal state with equal rights for all peoples were never implemented. Even the spirit of the Czechoslovak Constitution no longer has any influence here. Even the Slovaks, whose agreement had led to the founding of this state in the first place, were left out of the distribution of power for a long time. The tensions ⁷³ ODSUN documents pages 539 ff ⁷⁴ Bernhardt, page 31 ⁷⁵ 1620, in the 30 Years War the Catholic League defeats the Protestant Bohemians in the Battle of the White Mountain. ⁷⁶ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, page 50 ¹³⁸ between Czechs on the one hand and Slovaks and Ruthenians on the other therefore also lead to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1939. But about that later. The Czechs are also not happy with the too many and too large minorities for their state. Especially the "minority" of the German Bohemians causes them difficulties. As early as 1920, one hears and reads complaints about the unwillingness of the Germans to use Czech in offices and schools and to accept Czech mayors and officials in the districts and communities where they still form a majority. The DeutschBöhmen were accused of being disloyal to their new state and of pursuing annexation to Austria or Germany. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Sudeten Germans' resentment of the domination and self-service of the Czechs in the new state grew steadily. The German ethnic group initially articulated itself in a fragmented manner in several parties. Thus, they remained politically without any influence for a long time. It was not until 1933 that a 35-year-old Sudeten German named Henlein succeeded in rallying the German-speaking citizens of Czechoslovakia in a movement he called the "Sudeten German Home Front." Henlein recognizes Czechoslovakia as the state of the Sudeten Germans, but he seeks to preserve and, where necessary, enforce the culture, birthright, economic position, and jobs of the German population in their new state⁷⁷. The Sudeten German Home Front

soon formed the Sudeten German Party (SdP), which became the party with the largest number of votes in the country in the May elections of 1935. The Prague government conjures up the upswing of the SdP for itself against its will. It dissolved two of the German parties and drove their voters to the

new one⁷⁸. In July 1936, the SdP also became the strongest faction in the Prague National Assembly with 44 seats. It is followed by the predominantly Slovak Agrarian Party, which henceforth provides the prime minister in the person of Milan Hodscha. Both the Sudeten Germans and the Slovaks push for the internal autonomy of the nations in the multiethnic state of Czechoslovakia promised in Saint-Germain. In February 1937, Henlein attempts to introduce a "People's Protection Bill" into the Prague National Assembly. The bill calls for the transformation of the constitution and the autonomy of the many nations of this state. The proposal has explosive power for Czechoslovakia, because in addition to the Sudeten Germans, there are also Hungarians, Ruthenians and Slovaks in the country, for whom the policy of centralization and Czechization in their country is a thorn in the side. In September 1937, Henlein had an inconclusive discussion with Prime Minister Hodscha on the question of German self-administration.

of German self-government. Further talks⁷⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, p. 59 ⁷⁸ The parties dissolved by the Czechoslovak government in 1935 are the German National Party and the German National Socialist Workers' Party ¹³⁹ on this question are subsequently refused by Hodja. In October, open confrontation between Czechs and Sudeten Germans occurs in the election campaign for municipal elections. Henlein, who at the time was still fighting over the future of the Germans within Czechoslovakia, now sends President Benes a formal ultimatum demanding that he declare the internal autonomy of the Sudetenland. Benes does not even dignify Henlein's ultimatum with a reply. Henlein's letter to Benes reaches the hands of the press in the German Reich immediately and without Henlein's knowledge and is published there before it has been presented to Benes. Thus the false impression is created that Henlein is cooperating with the German Reich. The leader of the Sudeten Germans could not free himself from this suspicion afterwards. Since he has not found a hearing with Hodscha and Benes and obviously will not find one, and since he is now considered a collaborator of the Germans anyway, Henlein sends a written request to Hitler on November 19, 1937, to support the German population in Czechoslovakia⁷⁹. This is his first call for help to the outside world, the last step before the official request to annex the Sudeten territories to the German Reich. German Interference in the Czech Sudeten Crisis In February 1938, Hodja and Benes offer concessions to the Sudeten Germans in the maintenance and recognition of the German language and culture, but they combine this offer with a sharp rejection of all demands for autonomy of nations within Czechoslovakia. The recognition of the German language and culture, however, is only what the Sudeten Germans would have been entitled to anyway under the Czechoslovak constitution. The Sudeten German population could no longer be won over with cultural concessions alone. Unemployment and material hardship of the Germans, who were economically disadvantaged by the Czech state in their own territories, intensify the conflict. Spontaneous demonstrations of Sudeten Germans take place in Eger (today Cheb), Reichenberg (today Liberec), Aussig (today Usti) and Komotau (today Chomutov). The Czechs react harshly with police operations, house searches, arrests and court proceedings. The multi-ethnic crisis in Czechoslovakia thus unexpectedly turned from a political dispute into an open violent conflict. On February 20, 1938, Hitler spoke publicly for the first time about the fate of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. In a speech to the Reichstag,⁸⁰ he commented on the situation of the Germans in Austria and Czechoslovakia, stating among other things: ⁷⁹ ADAP, Series D, Volume II, Document 23 ⁸⁰ This was the first speech ever broadcast on television, albeit only in Berlin ¹⁴⁰ "Two of the states on our borders alone enclose a mass of 10 million Germans. Until 1866, they were still united with the German people as a whole in a federation under constitutional law. Against their own will, they were prevented by peace treaties from uniting with the Reich ... the separation from the Reich under constitutional law cannot lead to a popular political disenfranchisement. That is to say, the general rights of national self-determination, which, by the way, were solemnly assured to us in Wilson's 14 points as a precondition for the armistice,

cannot be disregarded simply because we are dealing with Germans here. Just as England represents its interests over a whole globe, so today's Germany will also know how to represent and safeguard its interests, even if they are much more limited. And among these interests of the German Reich is also the protection of those German nationals who are not in a position of their own ... to secure for themselves the right to a general human, political and ideological freedom." 81 With the 10 million Germans abroad mentioned, everyone at home and abroad knows that Hitler means not only the 6 million German-Austrians but also the more than 3 million Sudeten Germans. Despite the dig at England, the German chancellor's advocacy of the Germans in Czechoslovakia certainly met with understanding from part of the British public. Thus the English media czar Rothermere commented in the DAILY MAIL on May 6, 1938: "The Germans are a very patient people. Nor can I imagine for a moment that Britain would have stood by quietly for twenty years while three and a half million Britons lived under the heel of a thoroughly detested people who speak a foreign language and have a totally different national outlook on the world. As far as I know my countrymen, they would have intervened against such a rape after a few years." With his February speech before the Reichstag, Hitler is not yet demanding a union. He does not pour oil on the fire. He only demands the right of self-determination for the Germans abroad, referring very cleverly to U.S. President Wilson's earlier promise. The fact that Hitler had already spoken before Foreign Minister von Neurath and the highest generals and admirals of the Wehrmacht a quarter of a year earlier, on November 5, 1937, about a later war against Czechoslovakia, has not been known to the public to date⁸². In this secret speech last Novem 81 Domarus, Vol. 1, pp. 801 f 82 The Hitler speech recorded by Colonel Hoßbach, see Domarus Vol. 1, pp. 748ff 141 ber Hitler had revealed to the generals that he considered Czechoslovakia a danger in Germany's rear in the event of later warlike conflicts with England or France, and that he planned to annex it if the opportunity arose. Preparations for such a Czech conquest, however, are not yet mentioned on November 5, 1937, let alone ordered. Henlein did not and will not learn of this secret Hitler speech later. Since Hitler's public speech in the Reichstag on February 20, 1938, he only knows that he can count on the support of the German government in the future. On March 12, 1938, Austria was annexed to Germany. But even after the annexation of Austria, to which the Sudeten Germans still feel they belong, they do not at first publicly demand more than their self-administration within Czechoslovakia. To demand more would have been high treason. The annexation of Austria by Germany nevertheless put the subject of "Czechoslovakia" on the agenda in London, Paris and Moscow. Here they rightly suspected that Hitler might next conquer Czechoslovakia for the sake of the Sudeten Germans and in order to get rid of the Czechs at his own back. From the time of the annexation of Austria, Germany was therefore implied to be trying to get at Czechoslovakia. Thus, from now on, talks are held between Prague, London, Moscow and Paris on how to oppose this in the event that it should come to pass. Two weeks after the annexation of Austria, the first official meeting between the leader of the Sudeten Germans, Henlein, and the "Führer" Adolf Hitler took place on March 28, 1938. An annexation of the Sudeten territories to the German Reich is not discussed even here⁸³. But Hitler knows in the meantime that the Sudeten Germans want to be annexed to Germany and Austria, which have just been united to form the "Greater German Reich". However, he is not sure how France, the Soviet Union and England would react to such an affiliation. Thus, he does not yet dare to publicly demand this annexation or even to carry it out. Hitler and von Ribbentrop, however, advise Henlein to make maximum demands on the government of Czechoslovakia, whose goal is "the full freedom of the Sudeten Germans". Otherwise Hitler put Henlein off: "The Reich will not intervene on its own. He, 84 Henlein, would be responsible for events himself for the time being." 84 Hitler has been secretly playing a double game since the aforementioned general meeting in November 37. While he continues to keep a low profile vis-à-vis Henlein, he changes the directive situation within the Wehrmacht in December

1937. For the first time, he orders plans to be drawn up for a later conquest of Czechoslovakia "and thus 83 ADAP, Series D, Volume II, Document 107 84 ADAP, Series D, Volume II, Document 107 142 the solution of the German space problem "85. So far, a war with Czechoslovakia has been considered and prepared for by the Wehrmacht only in connection with possible war intentions of the French. In such a scenario, Czechoslovakia has always been the second enemy in a two-front war feared by the German side. With Hitler's

new directive of December 21, 1937⁸⁶ Czechoslovakia became its own target of war and conquest. Now it is no longer just about the "homecoming" of the Sudeten Germans. Now Czechoslovakia is on Hitler's agenda as an extension of the German living space and as a militarily permanent risk to Germany's security. The new directive leaves open the timing of a German attack. One passage reads: "If the political situation does not develop in our favor, or develops only slowly, the triggering of the "Green " case from our side will have to be postponed for years. ⁸⁷ From now on, Grün is the cover name of the Wehrmacht for Czechoslovakia. Hitler

has internal preparations made for the conquest of Czechoslovakia and demands externally and publicly no more than that the state leadership in Prague "treat the Sudeten Germans decently." On April 21, 1938, Hitler gives Colonel General Keitel, the head of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, the order to deal with Czechoslovakia. He is thus to have Hitler investigate the possibility of an attack by the Wehrmacht against Czechoslovakia⁸⁸. The minutes of the conversation are entitled "Grundlagen zur Studie , Grün". Hitler also leaves the timing of such an undertaking completely open in this first conversation. He tells Keitel "that for the time being he has no intention of attacking" and that he intends to wait for a Czech incident as the occasion for his action⁸⁹. The minutes of this meeting between Hitler and Keitel begin with the sentence: "Strategic attack out of the blue without any occasion or possibility of justification is rejected." ⁹⁰ Hitler gives two different reasons to Keitel for the preparations now demanded for a warlike confrontation with Czechoslovakia. The first is concern for the future fate of the Sudeten Germans. The second concerns the strategic importance of Czechoslovakia for Germany. Hitler speaks of the "untenable situation for us, once the great confrontation in the East ... especially with Bolshevism. It was his ⁸⁵ ⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ ⁸⁸ ⁸⁹ ⁹⁰ IMT, Vol. XXXIV, Document 175-C ADAP, Series D, Vol. VII, Page 547 (Annex 1 to the corresponding directive of December 7, 1937) ADAP, Series D, Vol. VII, Page 547 (Annex 1 to the corresponding directive of December 7, 1937) Domarus, Vol. 1, Pages 851 f and Keitel, Page 222 IMT, Vol. X, Page 569 ADAP, Series D, Vol. II, Document 133 143 most sacred conviction that the Reich would be threatened by the greatest danger from here. Czechoslovakia will then be the springboard for the Red Army and the landing place for its air force." ⁹¹ With this, Hitler indicates once again, after his speech already mentioned and recorded by Colonel Hoßbach, that he considers Czechoslovakia to be a problem for Germany not only because of the Sudeten Germans. He sees the neighboring country in the East above all as a confederate of those states which ideologically or power-politically are on the opposite course to Germany. And he sees in the Czech Republic "new living space in the East". Fig. 4: Konrad Henlein on his way to a rally of the Sudeten German Party in Asch on May 6, 1938 Henlein still has no idea of all this. He is still fighting for the full autonomy of the Sudeten Germans within Czechoslovakia. Henlein uses the next party congress of the SdP in Karlsbad to announce an eight-point list of demands to the Prague government. In this "Karlsbad Program" of April 24, 1938, which Henlein immediately says are minimum demands, he ⁹¹ Keitel, page 222 144 demands 1. the full equality of the German ethnic group with the Czech people, 2. the recognition of the German ethnic group as a legal entity, 3. the determination and recognition of the German settlement area, 4. the establishment of a German self-administration in the German settlement area as far as the affairs of the German ethnic group are concerned, 5. Legal protection for the Sudeten Germans living outside the closed German settlement

areas, 6. Reparation of the damage done to the German ethnic group by injustice since 1918, 7. German public employees in the German territories, and 8. Full freedom of confession to the German nationality and to the German-92 Weltanschauung.⁹² Henlein does not demand the annexation of the Sudetenland to the German Reich. What he demands remains within the framework of the 14 Wilson points, within the framework of the peoples' right to self-determination and within the framework of the Czech-Slovak "Pittsburgh Agreement" of 1918, in which the peoples within Czechoslovakia were assured autonomy according to the Swiss canton model. But in the background and without Henlein's knowledge, Adolf Hitler was waiting for the Czechs to deliver themselves to him at some point through their own mistakes. The Czechoslovak Escalation The Carlsbad Program had a tremendous impact. No sooner had it become known than the representatives of the Slovaks, the Poles and the Hungarians in the Prague parliament demanded equal autonomy for themselves. In the following two weeks, the governments in London and Paris repeatedly press the government of Czechoslovakia to negotiate with the Sudeten Germans and to find a quick and peaceful solution to the nationality problems. Prime Minister Hodscha relents and presents the draft of a federal constitution to the British government in order to save what can be saved. But Henlein does not trust the Czechoslovak government to make an honest effort and refuses to hold talks on Hodja's draft constitution. Instead, he travels to London to present a picture of the situation of the Sudeten Germans under the rule of the Czechs. This picture looks truly bleak at the time. From May 1 to 31, 1938, 3 Sudeten Germans are killed and 130 injured, many of them seriously, in raids in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, 40 attacks with maltreatment 93 of Sudeten German citizens have become known.⁹³ 92 ODSUN Documents, page 719 93 Bernhardt, page 210 145 On May 20, 1938, Hitler gives further consideration to a military operation against Czechoslovakia. He drafts a new directive for the "case of green." Still his "conditions" are such that he leaves it to the Czechs to dig their own grave. The directive begins with the statement, "It is not my intention to break up Czechoslovakia without challenge in the very near future by military action, unless an inevitable development of political conditions within Czechoslovakia compels me to do so." ⁹⁴ Hitler cannot know on this day that at exactly the same time Dr. Benes is already in the process of providing him with an occasion for the next German move. President Benes mobilizes the army of Czechoslovakia on May 20, calls 180,000 reservists to arms, and claims by way of justification that Germany, for its part, had previously mobilized. The Czech War Ministry adds that the German Wehrmacht is already on the march to Czechoslovakia with 8 to 10 divisions⁹⁵. But both news are false⁹⁶. Benes tried to win over the British, Russians and French by this move and against the Sudeten Germans. The following day, newspapers in Europe and the USA reported that the "clear no" of the Czechs had forced Hitler to desist from conquering Czechoslovakia. Hitler had "given in" and his declarations on the Sudeten question were "nothing but wind. The British ambassador in Berlin Henderson commented on this event two years later in his memoirs: "It was above all the jubilation of the press that gave Hitler the excuse for his worst incursion of that year, and that drove him finally across the line between peaceful negotiations and the use of force.... The Germans had never mobilized nor ... had they in reality at the time the slightest intention of undertaking a coup d'état against Czechoslovakia.... We had rashly cried "The wolf is coming, the wolf is coming!" The press campaign against Germany had two disastrous consequences. It served Hitler as an excuse for a violent solution, it fatally encouraged the Czechs to feel secure in their situation, and it strengthened Benes in his reluctance to satisfy the Sudeten Germans." ⁹⁵ 94 Domarus, Vol. 1, page 863 95 Henderson, page 135 96 The ambassadors of England and France in Berlin have the news of the alleged German mobilization verified by their military attaches on the spot. The news from the Czechs proves to be false. See Henderson, page 135 and Rassinier page 177 97 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, page 103 95 Henderson, page 140f 146 Hitler, who up to now had done nothing against Czechoslovakia, realizes very well that Benes

wants to use the rumor of war to draw France and England to his side and to get Germany into trouble. He is outraged and acts without long hesitation. On May 28, a week after the mobilization of troops in Czechoslovakia, he summons the chiefs of the three branches of the Wehrmacht and other top officers, as well as the foreign minister and his predecessor in office, to the Reich Chancellery. Hitler tells them that, in view of the threatening gestures of the Czechs, he has now decided to "eliminate the Czechs at lightning speed" if the opportunity arises.⁹⁹ During this general meeting on May 28, Hitler does not mention the fate of the Sudeten Germans once. On this day and in this circle he is concerned with another question. He is concerned here solely with evaluating the strategic importance that Czechoslovakia will have in future conflicts between Germany, France and Great Britain. Hitler speaks of the resistance which the British and French will offer to the further strengthening of Germany, especially when it will one day be a question of demanding the German colonies annexed by the two powers, or replacements for them in Eastern Europe. Hitler sees a warlike confrontation between Germany on the one side and France and Great Britain on the other as very likely in this case. And Czechoslovakia, with about 45 divisions, is on the side of Germany's opponents and in Germany's rear. The same idea had already been expressed by Hitler in the speech to the generals on November 5, 1937, already quoted. Now Czechoslovakia, having mobilized on May 20 and shown its teeth to Germany without German prompting, is ripe, in Hitler's view, to disappear as a risk from Germany's rear. The content of this general meeting in May 1938 makes it understandable why Hitler is still not satisfied six months later when the Sudetenland is awarded to him at the Munich Conference. For Hitler, the Sudeten territories were only part of the Czech problem. In the summer of 1938, he was really concerned with the danger at Germany's back door. It is about the Czech Republic. On May 30, 1938, Hitler orders Keitel to quietly prepare the Wehrmacht for an attack on Czechoslovakia in such a way that a campaign to that end could begin on October 1, 1938. In addition, he orders the construction of the Westwall, a long-range defense against France, to be accelerated. He feared that the French would not stand by and watch a German-Czech confrontation without invading Germany themselves. As late as May 1938, the British government learned of German preparations for a confrontation with Czechoslovakia. This may be the reason that on August 3 it sends a commission under Special Ambassador Runciman⁹⁹ BA-MA, N 28/3, Page 25 147 ciman to Prague to ascertain the state of Sudeten-Czech differences and, if necessary, to mediate. Runciman's negotiations move nothing in the Sudeten Germans' favor "except superficial friendliness on both sides."¹⁰⁰ Lord Runciman learns very quickly that a settlement between Czechs and Sudeten Germans is no longer possible. Until the end of August, it is above all President Benes who stonewalls and does not want to accommodate the German citizens of his state. When Benes finally gave in, it was the representatives of the Sudeten Germans who wanted to join Germany and were no longer interested in the concessions made by the Czechs. This is the time for Runciman to break off his journey. He sees that there is no longer any hope for an understanding between Czechs and Sudeten Germans. Runciman's report of September 21, 1938, is scathing for the Czechs. It is true that he blames Henlein alone for the final breakdown of the talks. But he also writes: "... My impression is that the Czech administration in the Sudeten area, although not actively oppressive and certainly not "terrorist" in the last 20 years, nevertheless displayed such a lack of tact and understanding and so much petty intolerance and discrimination that the discontent of the German population inevitably had to develop into an uprising. The Sudeten Germans also realized that many promises had been made to them in the past by the Czechoslovak government, but that little or nothing followed these promises."¹⁰¹ He goes on to say that Czech officials and policemen with no knowledge of German were assigned to purely German districts, Czechs were settled in German areas, Czech firms were given preference in the awarding of state contracts, social aid was concentrated on the Czechs, and so on and so forth. "Even now," Runciman laments, "at the time of my mission, I have found no

willingness on the part of the Czech government to remedy this state of affairs to any exhaustive degree." Runciman concludes by recommending that the border districts with predominantly German populations be immediately separated from Czechoslovakia and annexed to Germany. For other areas where the Sudetes do not form a large majority, he proposes referendums and 102 autonomous status within the remaining Czechoslovakia.¹⁰² In addition to the Sudeten question, differences between Czechs and Slovaks shook the Czechoslovakia named after both peoples. The Slovaks recall the 1918 Treaty of Pittsburgh, in which representatives of both peoples agreed to a common state with equal nations ¹⁰⁰ Henderson, page 143 ¹⁰¹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Appendix II, Document IV ¹⁰² Ibid. And Francois-Poncet, page 370 ¹⁴⁸ had. The Czechs never honored this "marriage contract" with the Slovaks, and now comes the late receipt. On June 5, 1938, representatives of the Slovaks met for a congress in Pressburg and demanded equal rights with the Czechs and autonomy for the Slovaks. Prime Minister Hodja, himself a Slovak, fears the consequences of this demand and denies the delegates of Pressburg the mandate for the Slovaks. Thus, even without German intervention, the last bridge over which the two titular nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks, could have found their way to each other was broken. While Lord Runciman was still trying to mediate between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans in Prague, an NSDAP party congress was held in Nuremberg from September 5 to 12, 1938. Hitler's keynote speech at the end of the event is harsh in tone, but Hitler still only demands the right of self-determination for the German population group within Czechoslovakia. He does not demand an annexation to the Reich, he does not urge a plebiscite, he does not issue an ultimatum. The key sentences of this speech on the problem of the neighboring country read: "... What the Germans demand is the right of self-determination, which every other people also possesses.... I demand that the oppression of the three and a half million Germans in Czechoslovakia should cease and that the free right of self-determination should take its place. For the rest, it is up to the Czechoslovak government to deal with the appointed representatives of the Sudeten Germans and to bring about an understanding one way or the other." ¹⁰³ But Hitler does not miss a warning either. At a later point he says: "The Germans in Czechoslovakia are neither defenseless nor abandoned. Let that be taken note of." For foreign countries this speech also leaves the way of peace open, and even at home no one can yet conclude from it that Hitler's aim is in reality a subjugation of Czechoslovakia in the near future. After all, Hitler had already ordered the Chief of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, General Keitel, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, a week earlier on September 3 to bring Wehrmacht units so close to Czechoslovakia by September 28 that they could march there after two more days' marches if necessary. Hitler has been watching for months the escalation of tensions between Czechs and Slovaks, between Czechs and Sudeten Germans, and the discontent of Hungarians, Poles, and Ukrainians in Czechoslovakia. He is obviously sure that the Czechs themselves will soon give him the reason to invade. He therefore restrains himself in his public speeches with demands for annexation. ¹⁰³ Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 904 ¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Czechoslovakia continued to seethe. On September 15, the Sudeten leader Henlein openly demanded annexation to the German Reich in a speech broadcast on the radio. The Czech government then tries to arrest him. Henlein flees to Germany and with him a few thousand young Sudeten German men of conscript age. England's and France's Interference Meanwhile, France and England are aware of the danger that Hitler and the Wehrmacht might do what Henlein and the Sudeten Germans demand. The French Government, knowing from previous soundings in London that the British are not prepared to march for the chauvinism of the Czechs, feels unable to fight for Czechoslovakia alone. Although the French government knows the reasons for the threatened disintegration of Czechoslovakia, it is determined to keep that state alive as an ally at Germany's back. Thus, on March 14, 1938, French Prime Minister Blum assured the Czech envoy in Paris in all

seriousness that France would fulfill its military obligations to Czechoslovakia without reservation if Germany were to take up arms because of the Sudeten Germans¹⁰⁴. But already the following day the tide turned. At the conference of the Standing Committee on Defense in Paris on March 15, Prime Minister Blum and the ministers and generals present concluded that the French armed forces were too weak for a two-front war by France and Czechoslovakia against Germany and that the Western Wall was now too strong to repel a French attack. They assessed the situation in such a way that Spain and Italy could stab France in the back, that Poland would attack Czechoslovakia on the German side, that Belgium would not tolerate a French march through, that the Soviet Union's possibilities for help were questionable, that England could not commit itself to any concrete support, and that it was therefore impossible to rush to the aid of the Czechs themselves¹⁰⁵. Thus, France was no longer prepared to remain loyal to the alliance with Czechoslovakia, even though Blum had promised this the day before. The British government under Chamberlain feels that it has no contractual obligation to the Czechs and that it is not equipped for a war against Germany.

for a war against Germany. Chamberlain does not make the slightest secret of this to the French. In the meantime, the French government changed. When the newly appointed French Prime Minister Daladier traveled to London on April 28 and 29, 1938, he was not prepared for a war. Churchill's *Memoirs*, page 335 105 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, pages 169–178 and Gamelin, pages 322 ff 150 to persuade the British to issue a declaration of guarantee for the existence of Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain replied during the talks: "The British people, and even less the Dominions, will never start a war to prevent the peoples of Central Europe from expressing their will in a referendum. ... If Benes had treated the German minorities he had annexed liberally, as he had undertaken to do in 1919, the present crisis would not exist. But there is another consideration. England disarmed from 1925 to 1935. The new armament programs for naval and air armament have just

begun. Only when these programs are completed can England face a new war." ¹⁰⁶ But the English government repeatedly informs the French and also the German Reich governments that it will side with France in the event of a war in which France intervenes¹⁰⁷. Thus, in the opinion of the government in office there, England has an interest in ensuring that the conflict of the many peoples within Czechoslovakia does not set off a chain reaction in which first the Czechs draw the French and then the French draw the British into a war with Germany. Only a group of opposition politicians around Winston Churchill is now already arguing in England that Britain must immediately form a "Grand Alliance" with France and the Soviet Union for war against Germany. And France does not cease to lull the Czechs and Slovaks into illusions. Prime Minister Daladier, against his better judgment, repeats the French troop pledge to the government of Czechoslovakia of the previous March, declaring on June 12, 1938: "France's obligations to Czechoslovakia are sacred and cannot be evaded." ¹⁰⁸

Chamberlain's First Attempt at Mediation and Benes' Proposal to Resettle the Sudeten Germans
Chamberlain realistically sees that events are now drifting toward a war that would force the British to side with the Czechs against their will. The Sudeten Germans, after all, are now openly demanding their annexation to the Reich. The Wehrmacht is "at the ready" to intervene with the Czechs. New clashes take on sharp forms. The Czech government then imposes martial law on 13 Sudeten German districts. In this situation, Prime Minister Chamberlain tries to save what can be saved. ¹⁰⁶ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, p. 185 ¹⁰⁷ Henderson, p. 132 ¹⁰⁸ Churchill *Memoirs*, p. 355. The French. Ambassador Francois-Poncet dates such a promise to July 12, 1938, see Francois-Poncet, page 370 151 On the night of September 13–14, Chamberlain writes Hitler a letter offering to come to Germany immediately to seek with him a peaceful solution to the pending problems in Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain dares to take this step without first consulting his foreign minister or even the entire cabinet about it. Hitler immediately agrees and invites the English Prime Minister to Berchtesgaden the day after. He even considers flying

to England himself to relieve the almost 70-year-old Chamberlain of the discomfort of such a trip. On September 15, Chamberlain and Hitler face each other in person for the first time. The conversation between the two takes place in private at Hitler's suggestion. Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Wilson, Chamberlain's foreign policy advisor, are not called in. Only an interpreter is present. Thus this first conversation between the two became a struggle between Chamberlain and Hitler alone. Hitler complained about the inability of the League of Nations to solve the minority problems of the Germans abroad, and he demanded the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans as well. In the conversation Hitler demands no less and no more than border areas inhabited by a German majority for the Reich and a referendum for disputed districts. According to him, the referendum should clarify whether further territories should be ceded by Czechoslovakia to Germany. The German chancellor announces that he will solve the problems of the Sudeten Germans "one way or another on his own initiative" in the near future. Chamberlain understands the threat of these words. "One way or another" in Hitler's way of expressing himself means: concession by the other side or invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Wehrmacht. Chamberlain promises Hitler that he will immediately discuss the question of the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans with his cabinet in London and then come to Germany for a second meeting as soon as possible. In return, he wrings from Hitler the promise to refrain from intervention in Czechoslovakia until then¹⁰⁹. In the meantime, the French Foreign Minister Bonnet informs the British government that the French will go along with all of Chamberlain's proposals to Hitler¹¹⁰. On September 16, Chamberlain, hardly back in London, gives his cabinet a report of the trip. It leaves no doubt that Germany is on the verge of intervening with troops in Czechoslovakia if the problems of the Sudeten Germans are not resolved as quickly as possible on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples. Lord Runciman, recalled from Prague, also reports to the Cabinet at the same meeting. He holds the Czech Government fully responsible for the situation in Czechoslovakia which has now arisen and is completely deadlocked. ¹⁰⁹ Henderson, page 151 ¹¹⁰ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, page 265 ¹¹² Runciman concludes his talk with the recommendation that the Sudeten territories be annexed to Germany in the shortest possible time without much discussion. President Benes, informed of this, now hastily tries to persuade the French government to accept a minimal solution. On September 17, he sends Prime Minister Daladier a letter with an attached map proposing the cession of three Sudeten territories with about 800,000 Germans. 2.3 million Sudeten Germans would then have remained with Czechoslovakia. The Benes letter contains the handwritten postscript: "I implore you not to announce this proposal, for I would have to deny it." ¹¹¹ With this concession, albeit too late, and the handwritten addendum, the French and British governments believe that from now on President Benes no longer opposes territorial cessions on principle, and they know that he does not want to bear the responsibility for them himself, but to leave it to the French. The conversation Benes has with the French Ambassador Lacroix when he hands him the said letter to President Daladier is revealing. Benes not only informs the Frenchman of the contents of his letter, for example his proposal to cede certain parts of the country and "8-900,000 Germans," but he also reveals to him that his thoughts go further than the letter to Daladier indicates. He adds to the proposal made in the letter: "On the other hand, provided the cession of the territories is agreed to, the government of the (German) Reich must accept to receive on its own territory approximately one million Sudeten Germans who have come from Czechoslovak territory." ¹¹² In addition to this letter to be delivered by Lacroix, Benes sends Czech Minister Necas to London and Paris to convince influential politicians there of his offer. Necas's mission is to convey to the British and French, as a condition for territorial cessions, that the German Reich must "take over at least 1.5 to 2 million German population." ¹¹³ The instruction to Minister Necas also contains the postscript, "Do not say that this comes from me." Here the idea underlying the later expulsion of the Sudeten Germans appears for the first time with Benes.

On September 18, Daladier and his foreign minister Bonnet meet with Chamberlain and Halifax in London. The British and French now jointly seek a solution that neither violates France's treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia nor leads to war over the Sudeten Germans' hitherto withheld right to self-determination. As a result of this 111 Benoist-Mechin, vol. 6, p. 267 112 Telegram from Lacroix to Foreign Minister Bonnet dated September 17, 1938, See ODSUN Documents, pp. 766f 113 ODSUN Documents, p. 762 153 conference, both governments, the British and the French, separately send the same request to Prague on September 19, to hand over to the German Reich, by themselves and on their own decision, with or without a plebiscite, the territories with more than 50% Sudeten German population and to entrust the new border demarcation to an international commission. As an incentive, the Czechs are informed of England's willingness to help guarantee the new borders of their state after the cession of the Sudetenland. This is a promise that England later evades with skill. This half-guarantee promise of September 19, 1938, will be taken up again in a later part of this book dealing with guarantees. The letters of the British and the French end with the request for a prompt reply, no later than September 21. That is forty-eight hours from now. But Chamberlain supplements the letter to Benes with an instruction to the British Ambassador Newton in Prague to advise President Benes that he must give his answer "absolutely this evening, or tomorrow at the latest." 114 This is even an ultimatum with no time to think. Chamberlain's and Daladier's decision to force the preservation of peace in Europe in this way met with a divided response in England and France. Besides the support of all those who want to spare Europe a new war, there are "hawks" in both countries who, notwithstanding the desolate internal condition of the Czechoslovak multinational state, would rather go to war with Germany than accept a Anschluss solution in favor of the Sudeten Germans. In France, the ministers Mandel, Reynaud, Champetier de Ribes, Campinchi, Zay, and de Chappedelaine formed the "war party." Mandel, Reynaud and Champetier threaten to resign from the cabinet if Daladier agrees to the annexation of the Sudeten territories to Germany 115. Colonial Minister Mandel even stooped to calling Benes, the president of Czechoslovakia, in Prague on September 20 and, in contrast to the letter from his prime minister, blatantly called on him to go to war, even to open the war: "... Neither Paris nor London has the right to dictate your attitude. If their territory is violated, you should not hesitate for a second to give the order to your army to defend the homeland..If you fire the first shot in self-defense, the reverberations in the world will be tremendous. The guns of France, Great Britain, and also Soviet Russia will begin to fire as if of their own accord..." 116 In England it is chiefly Churchill,

Vansittart, the government's foreign policy adviser, and Eden, the predecessor of the present Foreign Secretary, who would rather have war than "Anschluss." Similarly, in Germany, there are Fal 114 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 938 115 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, page 275 116 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 6, page 276 154 ken and doves. The most prominent representative of the peace party in the Reich is Aviation Minister Goering, at the same time commander-in-chief of the German Air Force. His counterpart as a hawk in the cabinet is Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. Czechoslovakia's multi-ethnic crisis also touched other states in Europe. Hungary, once ruler of Slovakia for almost a millennium, reflects on the territories in southern Slovakia, where nearly 750,000 Hungarians still live. On September 22, the Hungarian government demands that Prague treat the Hungarian minority in the same way as the German minority in the future. Poland demands the industrial area of Teschen, where there is a small minority of Poles. Poland, which feels close ties with Hungary, also lobbies Hitler for an annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary, which would create a common Polish-Hungarian border. Hitler, it should be mentioned here, on this occasion for the first time raises with the Poles the desire for a quid pro quo. It is the desire for an annexation of the city of Danzig and for an extraterritorial highway connection through Pomerelia into East Prussia, which is cut

off from the Reich. On September 21, the Polish government announces its territorial demands in three notes to Prague, Paris and London. The next state with ambitions is the Kingdom of Italy. It is not a neighbor but an interested party. It wants to play a role as a protecting power of Hungary and as a supremacy in the area of the Danube countries. The "Duce" Mussolini demands a referendum for all minorities in Czechoslovakia, but he urges peace and, in the spirit of Hitler, demands that war, if it cannot be avoided, be limited to the source of conflict. Mussolini said several times in public speeches at the time that Italy would remain neutral in a war over Czechoslovakia as long as Great Britain also stayed out of it. While the British and French governments search for a solution without bloodshed, "the internal situation of Czechoslovakia is developing from bad to worse."¹¹⁷ Propaganda in the German Reich paints a black picture and further inflames the Sudeten Germans. If one deducts the untruths of the German media, there still remain a few summary executions and a few hundred arrests of members of the German population group. In Germany, in return, 150 Czechs residing here are taken hostage to stop further shootings in Czechoslovakia. Sudeten leader Henlein publicly declares that the Sudeten Germans have no choice but to take their fate into their own hands and arm themselves. He calls on the Germans in Czechoslovakia who are fit for military service to form a "Sudeten German Free Corps" in the territory of the Reich and to liberate the homeland themselves. Within two days, 40,000 young men gather on the German side. From there, they begin skirmishing against the Czech troops stationed on the border until Hitler puts a stop to it. Startled by the turmoil in Czechoslovakia and seeking safety from war, some 240,000 Sudeten Germans leave their homeland in September 1938 and flee to the German Reich¹¹⁸. Roosevelt's Attempt to Save Czechoslovakia Shortly before the crisis reaches its peak, on September 19, the great power in the background is still trying to save Czechoslovakia. For President Roosevelt, the multiethnic state of the Czechs and Slovaks was part of the post-war order in Europe, which the dictator Hitler was not allowed to change without the approval of the USA. Here Roosevelt is also concerned with the claim to leadership that he makes for the USA in Europe. The Sudeten Germans' claim to self-determination is of lesser importance against this claim to leadership. The president proposes a naval blockade against Germany to Sir Lindsay, the British ambassador in Washington. According to the proposal, American and British naval forces should cut off Germany from its overseas imports with a continental blockade from the North Sea across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean to Suez¹¹⁹ and thus force it to accept the status quo of the Sudeten Germans. Roosevelt accepts to break the right of the USA. Naval blockades are acts of war under international law, and the U.S. is neutral under its own national law. The President is willing to take the U.S. to war for the preservation of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs give in At noon on September 19, 1938, the British-French proposal to cede the Sudeten territories to Germany is handed to the Czechoslovak President. Benes goes into seclusion with his cabinet for 30 hours at Hradcany¹²⁰. Nervousness in Paris and London increases, as the decision on peace or war now rests with the Czechs, even for the British and the French. For the Czech government, however, it is not just a question of peace or war. Rather, for the Czechs, it is a matter of the continued existence of a multiethnic state they dominate or its breakup. At 8 p.m. on September 20, Czech Foreign Minister Krofta communicated the cabinet decision to the ambassadors of England and France. The government of Czechoslovakia refused to cede the Sudetenland and asked the governments in Paris and London to "revise their position."¹²¹ But the statement was obviously very weak. ¹¹⁸ Henderson, page 151 ¹¹⁹ Bavendamm, Roosevelt's War, page 129 ¹²⁰ Castle and Seat of Government in Prague ¹²¹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 987 156 Just two hours later, Prime Minister Hodja swung into action and had the following telegram sent to the governments in Paris and London: "In agreement with the President of the Republic (Benes), I declare the following: If I were to declare personally to Benes this night that in the event of a war between Germany and Czechoslovakia over the Sudeten Germans France would

not intervene in view of its agreements with England, the President of the Republic would take note of this declaration. The Prime Minister (Hodja) would then immediately convene the Cabinet, all the members of which would then be ready to yield 122 123 with the President of the Republic." Thus, for the second time in a week, Czech President Benes and Slovak Prime Minister Hodja shift the responsibility for the release of the Sudeten Germans from their confederation to those who forced these Germans into Czechoslovakia in 1919, the French. Shortly after this "capitulation" of the Czechoslovak leadership, the French government declared, as the Czechs now suggested to it, that France would not help if the Czechoslovak government rejected the Anglo-French plan and the Germans attacked. A rejection of the Anglo-French plan would lead to an extinction of the Franco-Czech alliance.^{122 123} 124 The English reaction is no less clear. It reads, "The Franco-British plan is the only means of preventing the threatened German attack If, after a new examination of the situation, the Czech government nevertheless decides to reject our proposal, it will of course be left to it to take all measures it deems appropriate to master the resulting situation....

master..." ¹²⁵ So, England and France decline to assist the Czechs in the event of a German attack. At 5 p.m. on September 21, Foreign Minister Krofta delivers to the ambassadors of England and France the final decision of the Czechoslovak government and President Benes. The Anglo-French plan for the cession of the territories inhabited by a majority of Sudeten Germans is accepted in it "with bitterness" ¹²⁶. The way is clear for further talks between Chamberlain and Hitler. ¹²² Parentheses contain author's notes ¹²³ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, page 289 ¹²⁴ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, page 290 ¹²⁵ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 991 ¹²⁶ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 1005 ¹⁵⁷ The Bad Godesberg Meeting, September 22-24, 1938 Hitler decides to meet Chamberlain halfway this time. Thus the site of the second meeting on September 22 is Bad Godesberg near Bonn on the Rhine. Prime Minister Chamberlain tells Hitler of the acceptance of the Anglo-French plan by the government of Czechoslovakia, achieved only with pressure and effort. He now counts on Hitler's gratitude, but to his dismay he slips in two new demands. The first is for equal arrangements for the Hungarian and Polish minorities. With this, Hitler takes up the demands of the Italian, Polish and Hungarian governments, which they had been making since the first Hitler-Chamberlain conversation. Secondly, Hitler demands the immediate occupation of the zones inhabited by a majority of Sudeten Germans by the Wehrmacht within only four days and, accordingly, the withdrawal of Czechoslovakia's police and military from there. Where does Hitler's haste come from so close to success, which, after all, is now obviously all but assured for him? Hitler, thanks to the German wiretap service¹²⁷, is now aware of developments of which even Chamberlain is unaware. On the one hand, the French minister Mandel had urged President Benes in the telephone conversation already mentioned to offer resistance to the Germans. In doing so, Mandel had laid out "the guns of France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union" as bait. On the other hand, the Prague government openly talked to the Czech ambassadors in Paris and London on telephone lines running through the Reich about the fact that time must now be gained until the opposition in France and in England overthrew Daladier and Chamberlain and replaced them with new heads of government who were ready for war¹²⁸. Hitler was aware of the cabinet crisis

in Paris and of the danger that soon a new prime minister from the nest of the hawks could take a confrontational course against Germany instead of the "peace prime minister" Daladier. Thus Hitler is suddenly in a hurry. The Godesberg conference threatens to fail quickly because of Hitler's demands. That the German chancellor's concern is not entirely unjustified proves to be the case while he is still negotiating with Chamberlain. On the evening of the first day of the conference, the government changed in Hradcany. At 10:30 p.m. on the second day of the conference, the new government of Czechoslovakia announced the General Mobilization, calling 1.3 million soldiers to arms. Obviously it

follows the advice of Minister Mandel and hopes – as the Frenchman Mandel said in his advice – that now the guns of France, Great Britain and Soviet Russia will start firing as if by themselves. Chamberlain tries to explain this mobilization to Hitler as a defensive measure¹²⁷ The central German eavesdropping service is the so-called Research Office in the Reich Air Ministry¹²⁸ Francois-Poncet, page 375 158 but even the most naive must now realize that the Czechs now no longer accept the Franco-English plan. Hitler assures Chamberlain that the Wehrmacht will not march as long as Anglo-German negotiations are in progress. And he moderates his demand for the surrender of the Sudeten territories in four days, postponing it by another five days to October 1, 1938. Benes "Soviet Plan" After the mobilization in Czechoslovakia, everyone expects war. In France, 600,000 reservists are called up that very night¹²⁹. Italy drafts 300,000 soldiers and deploys troops on the French border. Belgium mobilizes. England brings the fleet to war strength¹³⁰. The Soviet Union had already begun three months before to draw in 330,000 reservists and to shift six army groups in White Russia and in the Ukraine toward the west¹³¹. Hungary and Poland had also mobilized ahead of Czechoslovakia. Benes meanwhile developed a new plan to avert the division of Czechoslovakia at the last hour. As early as September 19, he had asked Moscow how the Soviet Union would behave in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. After an initial evasive answer from Moscow and another inquiry from Prague, Benes received the desired promise of help. But the Soviets cannot agree with either the Romanians or the Poles on permission to march their troops through either country. King Carol II of Romania comments on the request from Moscow, saying, "I prefer to have the Germans as enemies in the country than the Russians as friends." The Polish government reacts similarly. On September 22, as mentioned, Benes replaces the anti-Communist Prime Minister Hodja with General Sirovy, who is agreeable to the Soviet Union, and he contacts the Polish government. He offers to cede the Teschen region to Poland, in exchange for which Warsaw would have to allow the passage of Soviet troops. The Polish government refuses because it can count on getting Teschen out of German hands soon even without this concession. The only success of the new Benes Plan is a warning from the Russians to the Poles that they will dissolve the Polish-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1932 if Poland participates in an attack against Czechoslovakia. Warsaw will feel the consequences of this threat in 1939.¹²⁹ Rassinier, page 190 130 Henderson, page 158 131 MGFA Mil. History USSR, vol. 2, page 127 159 The new Benes plan thus quickly failed, but it first torpedoes the Franco-British effort. On September 24, no sooner had General Sirovy taken office as the new prime minister than he sent the following statement to foreign diplomats in Prague: "Now that our mobilization has begun, further concessions on our part are no longer possible. We have passed the dangerous stage, the military situation is good. We had expected yesterday a first attack by the German air force, which should prevent the massing of our troops. It did not take place. One must interpret this restraint in Berlin as a sign of weakness."¹³² Such is the state of affairs in Prague when the British ambassador presents Hitler's Godesberg conditions to the Czechoslovak government. This time the Czechs' response follows on its heels. On September 25, Prague rejects Hitler's new Godesberg demands for an immediate occupation of the Sudetenland by the Wehrmacht as unacceptable¹³³. Thus, the British effort to avert war over the Sudeten question failed again for the time being. In the following days, Europe stands on the brink of a new war. The German Wehrmacht has marched up with seven army divisions. The Czech government rejects Hitler's Godesberg demands especially because of the demanded plebiscite and brings the army with reservists to 43 divisions¹³⁴. The government of the Soviet Union withdraws from Czechoslovakia despite its mutual assistance pact. Poland insists on handing over the Teschen industrial area. Hungary demands the cession of the "Hungarian territories" and self-determination for the Slovaks and Ruthenians¹³⁵. The governments in Paris and London waver. The French demand England's help with arms, and London realizes that Paris itself has not yet prepared anything militarily to save Czechoslovakia. Despite all this,

Daladier and Chamberlain left no stone unturned to prevent Hitler from carrying out the annexation of the Sudetenland himself. Both unmistakably threaten to wage war against Germany if German troops march into the Sudetenland¹³⁶. The British government mobilizes its fleet for this purpose and communicates this to the Reich government in order to lend emphasis to the threat¹³⁷. Hitler insisted that the Czech government accept his Godesberg demands by September 28. Otherwise, so his threat was¹³² Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, page 309 ¹³³ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 1092 ¹³⁴ Goerlitz, page 33 ¹³⁵ Roos, Poland and Europe, page 352 ¹³⁶ Henderson, pages 158 and 160 ¹³⁷ Churchill, Memoirs, page 395 ¹⁶⁰ de the Wehrmacht occupy the Sudeten territories by force if necessary on October 1, 1938. But despite the threatening gestures from two sides, Hitler asked Chamberlain in a letter for "continued good mediation services with the Czech government" and promised "that after handing over the Sudeten territories Germany will leave Czechoslovakia alone and will not violate its independence in any way." ¹³⁸ Chamberlain left no stone unturned on this and the following days to prevent a warlike confrontation over the Sudeten question. As late as September 27, he urges President Benes to accept the German demands. He added that Czechoslovakia would not be restored even

would not be restored to the way it was before even after a won war¹³⁹. In other words, even after a won war, Czechoslovakia must reckon with the loss of the Sudetenland and perhaps other parts of the country. The Munich Conference of September 29 and 30, 1938 The day after, on September 28, Chamberlain then tells Hitler that he had gotten the impression from reading his letter that the German wishes could be satisfied even without war. He was prepared to come to Berlin and discuss the problems at hand with him and a French and an Italian delegation¹⁴⁰. Hitler did not respond to this offer at first. On the same day, the expiration day of the ultimatum, U.S. President Roosevelt also sends a telegram to Hitler proposing a conference of all interested states to solve the problems. At the same time Roosevelt asks the Italian head of state Mussolini to change Hitler's mind and to mediate in the Sudeten question. The same request was also made by Chamberlain to Mussolini. The French Prime Minister Daladier also tried to solve the crisis without war. He sent Hitler a plan for the cession of the Sudetenland that had been worked out in France¹⁴¹, which fulfilled Hitler's demands but had not been discussed with the Czechs. Hitler does not accept this plan either. Now Mussolini intervenes. It raises his prestige that the USA and England ask him for mediation, and he sees the chance to earn the thanks of the Germans, the Poles and the Hungarians at the expense of the Czechs, Slovaks and Rumanians. Mussolini offers Hitler mediation in the Sudeten crisis, and the "Führer", who sees in the "Duce" his partner, accepts without hesitation. Hitler invites the heads of state and government from Rome, Paris and London to Munich for the following day. The Prague government is informed from London, ¹³⁸ Letter of September 27, 1938, see Henderson, page 161 ¹³⁹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume II, Document 1138 ¹⁴⁰ Henderson, page 163 ¹⁴¹ Francois-Poncet, page 378 ¹⁶¹ yet not invited by Hitler. The "Führer" did not want to negotiate with the government, which did not want to give freedom to the Sudeten Germans. Fig. 5: The participants of the conference From left: the British Prime Min. Chamberlain, the French. Daladier, Adolf Hitler, the Ital. Mussolini and his Foreign Minister, Count Ciano. Count Ciano. In the background: Chief Interpreter Dr. Schmidt, the French Foreign Min. Foreign Min. Bonnet, Reich Foreign Minister v. Ribbentrop, State Secretary v. Weizsäcker, the Secretary General of the French Foreign Ministry Leger. Foreign Ministry Leger. The conference of Mussolini, Daladier, Chamberlain and Hitler began with a presentation of the national positions of the four countries. Mussolini takes over the moderation. He is the only one who speaks all the native languages of the four gentlemen gathered here. The English Prime Minister Chamberlain demands twice in the course of the talks that Czech representatives also be admitted to the negotiations, but

Hitler refuses. The same injustice as at Versailles. After some controversial back and forth, Mussolini submits a compromise proposal, which neither the British nor the French know was drafted the day before by Göring, Neurath and Weizsäcker¹⁴², then approved by Hitler and forwarded to Mussolini. 142 Göring is Reich Minister of Aviation and Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, von Neurath has been Foreign Minister and von Weizsäcker Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry 162 The three gentlemen mentioned, all representatives of a peace solution, not only deceived Daladier and Chamberlain. They put the brakes on their own Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who obviously would have preferred a Sudeten solution by force. Hours of hard struggle followed. But by midnight, Mussolini's "German" proposal is essentially accepted. At 1:30 in the morning of September 30, 1938, the treaty is signed. The main points of this Munich Agreement, named after the meeting place, are: - The evacuation of the predominantly German-inhabited Sudeten territories begins on October 1 and is to be completed by October 10, 1938. - An international committee with Czech participation shall designate additional areas in which subsequent affiliation shall be clarified by referendum. - A right of option for Czechs and Sudeten Germans within six months ensures a voluntary population exchange. Czechs from the Sudeten territories can move to Czechoslovakia and Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia to the Sudeten territories according to their own decision. - The Czechoslovak government releases all Sudeten Germans who wish to do so from military and police service. - When the Czechs withdrew, no existing institutions would be destroyed.¹⁴³ This Munich Agreement of the four powers was presented to the Czechs by the ambassadors of England and France as a verdict without the possibility of appeal, with the urgent recommendation that it be accepted immediately. A German victory all along the line. But for Mussolini, the mediator, the conference was only a partial success. His attempt to assert the interests of the Poles and Hungarians failed because of Chamberlain's objections. The territorial claims from Budapest and Warsaw were postponed for later settlement. Two additional agreements to the Munich Treaty are important in the later course of history. One is in the "Supplement" to the Treaty and concerns guarantees for "the new frontiers of Czechoslovakia." The second is an additional paper signed by Chamberlain and Hitler alone. First, about the supplement of the treaty. Later historiography conveys that Germany gave a guarantee in Munich for the continued existence of Czechoslovakia. But this is neither in the treaty nor in this addendum about guarantees. It says: "Addendum to the Agreement. Munich, September 29, 1938 His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have joined in the foregoing agreement on the basis that they stand by the offer contained in § 6 of the English¹⁴³ Treaty of Locarno, Part II, Volume 4, pages 154 ff 163 Map 12: New External Borders of Remnant Czechoslovakia as of October 21, 1938 French proposals of September 19, concerning an international guarantee of the new borders of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked attack. As soon as the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia is settled, Germany and Italy will in their turn give Czechoslovakia a guarantee. Signatures -" 144 In another additional statement it is still agreed that a new conference of the four powers will be called if the problem of the Polish and Hungarian minorities is not solved within three months. Thus, the German government did not give any guarantees in Munich. It promised them in the event that "the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia is settled." So it now remains to be seen whether this case will arise. After the account of the Vienna arbitration, this thread will be taken up again in a later chapter. The second agreement of such importance at Munich is the paper signed by Chamberlain and Hitler. For all Mussolini's mediation successes, it remains above all the merit of the British Prime Minister Chamberlain to have spared Europe the road to a new war in September 1938. His visits to Berchtesgaden and Bad Godesberg, his moderating influence on the governments in Paris and Berlin, and his urging toward Prague finally 144 Treaty of Locarno, Part II, Volume IV, page 156 164 brought success. In this tug-of-war over the right of self-determination of

the Sudeten Germans on the one hand and the vested rights of Czechoslovakia on the other, in this poker game for peace or war, a deep mistrust of Hitler has set in with Chamberlain. So the English prime minister decides to commit the German chancellor with another declaration for the future. After the conference, Chamberlain asks Hitler for a confidential conversation in private. In doing so, he offers to place Anglo-German relations on a new footing "in the desire never again to wage war against each other" and to settle future disputes through British-German consultations. The offer is put in writing in the form of a declaration, and Chamberlain asks Hitler to sign it with him. Hitler, still grateful for Chamberlain's concession the day before, signs, apparently unaware of what this commits him to. The signature and the obligation caught up with Hitler again when, six months later, he declared the rest of Czechoslovakia, which was in the process of disintegration, a German protectorate without England's involvement. While the Czech government in Prague was still deliberating whether to accept its "dictate of Munich," the Polish ambassador came forward with an ultimatum demanding the surrender of the Teschen region within just twelve hours. In case of refusal, the Polish government threatened to declare war on Czechoslovakia. The Czechs gave in and Teschen changed hands. This event later had serious consequences for Poland and Germany. With its threat, Warsaw broke the Kellogg Pact of 1928 and the Litvinov Protocol of 1929, thus causing the dissolution of the Polish-Soviet mutual assistance pact of 1932.

Three treaties that could have protected Poland in 1939. It is significant for the German-Polish relationship that the Polish government initially expected to obtain Teschen at the Munich Conference with German help. After the self-execution without German intervention, Warsaw later saw no reason to show gratitude to the Germans for this in the Danzig question. This, in turn, is the expectation Hitler has of the Poles. The return home of the Sudeten Germans is a success with aftertaste and consequences. It was possible only with German pressure and threat, and it has revealed that Hitler the politician is prepared to wage war for his aims. Furthermore, the annexation of the Sudeten Germans has upset the powers that once forced these three million people into Czechoslovakia against the right of self-determination of peoples and against their will, the French and the US. In both countries, people are soon convinced that the British and French had to accept defeat politically in Munich because they were poorly equipped militarily. In Paris, Prime Minister Daladier, no sooner had he returned than he promised the parliament that he would press ahead with rearming the French nation with energy. And in the USA, six weeks after the Munich Conference, President Roosevelt launched an air armament program to bring the US Air Force up to 10,000 military aircraft¹⁴⁵. In addition to all this, the Soviet Union is now also alienated, which, although the protecting power of Czechoslovakia, remained excluded in Munich. Most seriously for the future, the Munich Conference made Great Britain the new protecting power of the rest of Czechoslovakia, a circumstance that would have consequences later. Thus, the German Reich pays the price of increasing isolation in Europe and America for the return home of the Sudeten Germans. In Paris and London, the Munich Agreement is ratified in the parliaments, in Paris with a whopping majority of 535 votes to 75 who are against. In London, there are 369 votes in favor with 150 against¹⁴⁶. The vote in the English House of Commons is preceded by a passionate debate that foreshadows the direction in which German-British relations are moving. The speeches range from understanding for the Sudeten Germans to sheer hostility against Germany, which becomes dangerous and too powerful for some MPs. Representative Raikes: "We should not forget that the Czechs annexed the German territories even before the Treaty of Versailles. Some honorable members of this House complain about the short time limit for handing over. I would remind you that the Czechs took 20 years before granting 147 rights to the Sudeten Germans." ¹⁴⁷ 148 Congressman Sir Southby: "We are all of the opinion that the Sudeten Germans had a concern, but that their grievances were not considered until Germany became strong enough to stand up for them-148." Congressman

Churchill: "We have suffered a complete defeat, mitigated by nothing. The system of alliances with the countries of Central Europe, on which France had hitherto based her security, has been destroyed, and I see no means of rebuilding it. All these countries in Central Europe will, one by one, fall under the spell of this tremendous system of political force, 145 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, page 15 146 Rassinier, page 215 147 Welles, page 133 148 Welles, page 133 166 overwhelmed not only by the military power but also by the economic power emanating from Berlin." 149 Churchill also comments on the Munich agreement while still on the radio, where he says on October 16: "The Czechoslovak Republic was the most democratic model state in Central Europe, a country where minorities were treated better than anywhere else." 150 Southby is about human rights, Churchill about competition and power. Chamberlain makes a grave foreign policy mistake during this House of Commons debate¹⁵¹ on the Munich Agreement. He

combines the approval of the Munich Agreement with a vote on a gigantic rearmament program, which is understandable in view of the lead Germany has had for two years in the army and air forces. The program includes an increase in the budget for the military from 400 million to 800 million pounds a year, 11,000 aircraft for the Royal Air Force by the end of 1939, the strengthening of the firepower of the fleet, and the rebuilding and upgrading of 6 active Army divisions plus 13 divisions for the Territorial Army¹⁵². This does not fit with the "four-eyes declaration" signed jointly by Chamberlain and Hitler five days earlier, which stated, among other things, "We regard the agreement signed last night and the German-English naval treaty¹⁵³ as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never again to wage war against each other." A doubling of the defense budget and the construction of 11,000 military aircraft in only 15 months are signals that smell of anything but peace. This must seem to Hitler, who until then had never publicly announced any further intentions of conquest, and who had recognized and established England's naval supremacy on his own initiative with the 1935 naval agreement, this must seem to Hitler like a breach of the promise of peace of five days before. Accordingly, his reaction: Four days later, in a speech he gave in Saarbrücken on October 9, he made no secret of his fears: "The statesmen who are facing us want peace - we must believe them. But they govern in countries whose internal structure makes it possible that they can be replaced at any time to make room for others who do not have peace so much in mind. And these others are there. It only needs in England instead of Cham 149 Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, page 363 150 Bernhardt, page 222 151 Debate on October 5, 1938 152 Rassinier, page 214 153 Fleet Treaty of June 18, 1935, in which Germany voluntarily limited her naval armament to 35% of Britain's 167 berlain Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Eden or Mr. Churchill come to power, we know perfectly well that the aim of these men would be to start a new world war at once. They make no secret of it at all. They speak it openly." 154 Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had tendered his resignation four days earlier in protest against the Munich Agreement, and Eden as well as Churchill had argued during the House of Commons debate on the treaty that England should have fought Germany to secure the Sudeten territories for Czechoslovakia. Thus, the British-German domestic scandal was already hanging badly, barely after Chamberlain and Hitler had jointly signed the Anglo-German promise of friendship and consultation 10 days earlier. Hitler's reaction to England's new parliamentary decision and to the arms increase decided there was not long in coming. In view of England's and France's uncertain attitude toward Germany, Hitler still saw Czechoslovakia, with its 45 army divisions and an air force about 1,500 aircraft strong, as a danger at Germany's back. In addition, Hitler considered the western part of Czechoslovakia, namely the Czech Republic, to belong historically to the German Reich and therefore wanted to annex it. Thus, Hitler mixed defensive thinking with aggressive plans. When, three weeks after the Munich Conference, he issued a new directive to the Wehrmacht for its tasks in the following period, he mentioned, in addition to the protection of the borders of the German Reich and the seizure of the

Memelland, which was still annexed by Lithuania, the "completion of the rest of Czechoslovakia". This directive states: "It must be possible to crush the Rest of Czechoslovakia at any time if it were to pursue a policy hostile to Germany." 155 Thus, the Rest of Czechoslovakia remains on Hitler's agenda, even if the dictator now leaves the date and details open. He is obviously counting on the self-destructive forces within Czechoslovakia. Otherwise, Hitler is keeping silent on this matter to the outside world. Yet another country keeps Czechoslovakia on its agenda. Polish Ambassador Lipski addresses Hitler on October 24 and expresses Poland's interest in annexing Carpatho-Ukraine to Hungary. Lipski takes the opportunity to mention that his government has been trying for some time to persuade Hungary to conquer Carpatho-Ukraine.¹⁵⁶ The decisions of Munich are bitter for the Czechs in the areas that now become part of Germany. About half of the approximately 700,000 Czechs in 154 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 955 155 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 960 156 ADAP, Series D, Vol. V, Document 81 168 the Sudetenland opt for Czechoslovakia under the right granted at Munich and resettle there. The other half, about 350,000 Czechs, remain with the Sudetenland without being exposed to later persecution. Opting for Czechoslovakia was a difficult step for those affected, even though the majority of these people had immigrated to the Sudetenland only after 1919. In spite of the six-month period granted and in spite of the right to take all property with them, many Czechs left their homeland in a hurry, leaving behind many possessions. Nevertheless, it was not an expulsion. This exodus, as bad as it was for those affected, is not a predecessor of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans by the Czechs in 1945.

by the Czechs in 1945, in which about 272,900 people lost their lives through murder and manslaughter and in other ways¹⁵⁷. The Munich Agreement is annulled after World War II, and it serves the Czechs and the victors to justify the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from their ancestral homeland in 1945 and the decrees of Prime Minister Benes. The Agreement is thereby reinterpreted as the cause of the expulsion and the decrees. However, the Munich Agreement is not the first cause of the crimes committed by the Czechs against the Sudeten Germans in 1945, but before that, in 1938, the effect of the breaches of word, discriminations, misdemeanors and crimes committed by the Czechs against "their" Germans since 1918. The heads of government of England, France and Italy do not put their signatures under the treaty in Munich alone in order to avert the danger of war. They signed this agreement in September 1938 over the heads of the Czechs also because they knew only too well that the Czechs had appropriated the territories of the Sudeten Germans in 1918 without legal title, by force of arms. They have had to realize that the Czechs and Slovaks have never fully granted the Germans and Hungarians the minority rights promised in Saint-Germain and enshrined in the 1920 Constitution. They know that the two titular nations discriminated against the Sudeten Germans personally, economically and politically as citizens of their state, and that they never attempted to integrate the Germans into their new state on an equal footing as their second most powerful population group. As for the consequences of the Munich Agreement, it should be added that a group of high German generals¹⁵⁸ had made preparations before the Munich Conference to arrest Hitler and put him on trial if he started a war over the Sudeten. The negotiating victory ¹⁵⁷ See Nawratil, page 89. The figures given in other literature on the Sudeten Germans who perished in the expulsion vary from about 30,000 in Czech pronouncements to 400. 000 according to the Federal Statistical Office ¹⁵⁸ These are Generals Adam, Beck, Graf Brockdorff-Ahlefeldt, Halder, Hoepfner, Ulbricht and von Witzleben ¹⁶⁹ von München lets the attempted coup fall flat and gives Hitler a nimbus that leads to similar attempts not being made again in the following five years. After Munich, the mystery initially remains as to whether Hitler intended to wage war by marching the Wehrmacht toward Czechoslovakia or to bluff all opponents. This has an effect a year later, when the German generals and the top diplomats at the Wehrmacht march against Poland do not know until the end whether Hitler wants to attack or just bluff his way to a negotiated or concession solution in the Danzig question. The Vienna Arbitration

Decision of November 2, 1938 After the Munich Conference, the problem of the Polish and Hungarian minorities, which the four powers had given themselves three months to solve, remains open for the time being. On October 1, German troops began to occupy the Sudetenland, which had been granted to Germany. On the same day, the Poles marched into the territory of Teschen, which had not been granted to them at that time. On October 14, one third of the German "invasion force" is withdrawn. Alongside these quickly created facts, a fierce tug-of-war is underway over the two outstanding minority issues. The Warsaw government tries to enforce its further interests in Czechoslovakia with the help of the German lever and with Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak help. The government in Budapest, on the other hand, negotiates with the responsible government in Prague. First the Hungarians: right at the beginning of October 1938, two delegations from Prague and Budapest meet to settle the minority rights of the Hungarians and a new course of the border. After almost two weeks, the negotiations end without results. The Italian head of state Mussolini, who still feels himself to be the patron of the Hungarians and who does not want to see his influence wane there, now presses the German Reich government to intervene in a helpful way. Mussolini fears that the Hungarian problem in Czechoslovakia cannot be solved in any other way within three months, and he wants to avoid the next quadripartite conference scheduled for that purpose. There England and France could exert influence to the detriment of Hungary and in favor of the Czechs and Slovaks. Berlin and Rome then jointly put pressure on Prague and Budapest to reach an agreement soon on the fate of the Hungarian minority and on the new course of the border. The governments in Budapest and Prague then declare on October 30 that they are prepared to recognize in advance an arbitration award that Germany and Italy will make on the dispute between the two states. Mussolini's fears of England are obviously unfounded in this case. The British government shows no interest in the dispute of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It itself recommends to the Italian government that the minority question be resolved by a German-Italian arbitration court without involving the governments in London and Paris¹⁵⁹. Fig. 6: Announcement of the Vienna Arbitration Award by Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop At the table from right to left: the Hungarian Foreign Minister v. Foreign Min. v. Kanya, Chief Dolm. Dr. Schmidt, Legationsrat Dr. Woermann, Foreign Minister v. Ribbentrop, the Ital. Foreign Min. Count Ciano, the Czech Foreign Minister. Foreign Min. Chvalkovski and Slovak. On November 2, 1938, a German-Italian arbitration commission met in Vienna. Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks present their positions and the arbitration court decides. A strip of territory running from west to east in the south of Slovakia with a corner in Carpatho-Ukraine is assigned to Hungary. Thus 746,000 Hungarians come home to the motherland. However, 75,000 Slovaks are also naturalized in Hungary against their will. With the Vienna arbitration decision, only one minority issue has been resolved. The second, which is still open after the Munich Agreement, remains unresolved. Immediately after the annexation of Czechoslovakia, the Polish state made a series of new demands for "Polish" territories¹⁵⁹ PAAA, R 29770, sheet 760 76 171 Map 13: Czechoslovakia's Land Losses after the Vienna Arbitration. However, apart from a strip of border land, these were mainly areas with coal deposits and chemical industry. The Polish territorial claims, which are recognizably more concerned with foreign mineral resources than with their own minorities, are not negotiated at the Vienna Arbitration Court. Thus the question of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia remains unresolved. And thus the time for a guarantee of the Italians and the Germans on the new borders of Czechoslovakia, foreseen in the Munich Agreement, has still not come. Now, the break of the hitherto contractual German-Polish relations is in the offing. Throughout October 1938 Poland tried to accelerate the disintegration of Czechoslovakia with Germany's help, to inherit Slovakia with parts of its industry and mineral resources, and to push Carpatho-Ukraine to the Hungarians. Poland wants the latter in order to have the support of the Hungarians at its own back door in the event of a war with Russia. For the

Poles, the Czechs and Slovaks are not partners but, in the event of a confrontation with the Soviets, allies of the potential enemy, and in their own backs. On October 24, during one of the talks that Polish Ambassador Lipski had with Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop in Berlin for this purpose, the latter brought up a new topic. Von Ribbentrop tells Lipski that Hitler would like to see Danzig reincorporated into the German Reich in the near future. This could well have been a trade at the time, Danzig for a piece of Czechoslovakia. But the Vienna arbitration award leaves Poland's wishes out of it. Here an opportunity is missed to settle the dispute over Danzig, which triggers the war a year later, in the course of a "trade". From October 24, 1938, the subject of Danzig is on the table between Berlin and Warsaw. The "Reichskristallnacht" on November 9, 1938 In this situation, already so tense in Europe, a drama occurs that will remain a permanent stain on Germany and will have severe consequences. The event belongs to this part of pre-war history because of its lasting impact on Anglo-American-German relations. At the same time as the persecution of German Jews, strong anti-Semitism also prevailed in Poland. While 170,000 German Jews leave their own country in the years from 1933 to 1938 and seek rescue from persecution abroad, 557,000 Polish Jews stream from East to West to escape persecution in Poland in Germany¹⁶⁰. The Reich government attempts to deport thousands of the poor refugees back to Poland, but there they have since been expatriated and are no longer allowed into their country. An 18-year-old Jew named Grynspan wants to draw the world's attention to the terrible fate of his fellow believers by committing a spectacular act. In order to do this, he shoots a German diplomat, also still young, the legation secretary vom Rath, in the German embassy in Paris, and then gets himself arrested. This is the second assassination in this period, after the murder of the German Wilhelm Gustloff, the leader of the German expatriates in Switzerland, by a Jew.

the second assassination of this kind by a Jew. The murder of Ernst vom Rath unleashes a fire of indignation in the German Reich. The day after Grynspan's act, hundreds of synagogues burn in Germany. Jewish stores are destroyed, even homes are looted. The night of this shameful pogrom on November 9-10, 1938, is given the macabre name "Reichskristallnacht." Shortly after the terrible event, further anti-Jewish laws are enacted in the German Reich. The effect on foreign countries is devastating. The suspicion of the Americans, the English and the French against National Socialist Germany receives new nourishment. In England and America, the already existing distrust of Germany's foreign policy goals is joined by open rejection of the injustice shown to the Jews. The consequences were not long in coming. U.S. President Roosevelt recalls the United States ambassador from Berlin. The Reich government reacts by recalling its man from Washington. Thus the thread between Berlin and Wash¹⁶⁰ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, Page 39 173 ington is cut. What weighed more heavily in the long run was Roosevelt's effort to tighten his grip on Germany. He proposes to Congress a new procedure that amounts to replacing the previous "cash-and-carry" system for supplying war weapons to England and France with a "lend-and-lease" system¹⁶¹. Even if Roosevelt's proposal does not yet find a majority in Congress, the new direction is thus marked out. Furthermore, he exerts pressure on Congress and industry to accelerate the ongoing armament projects. With the "Reichskristallnacht" America's neutrality policy finds the beginning of its end. One of the later consequences of this change in the U.S. is the hardening of the fronts in the dispute over Danzig in the summer of 1939. The governments in Warsaw, London and Paris immediately learn from Roosevelt's political entourage that the U.S. president wants to put an end to Hitler's and the NSDAP's rule in the German Reich and for this reason wage war with Germany. Thus, on November 19, 1938, only a few days after the "Reichskristallnacht," the U.S. ambassador in Paris, William Bullitt, while in Washington, declared to his Polish colleague there, Count Potocki: "Only force and finally a war can put an end to the insane expansion of Germany in the future." Potocki, who reports this hot off the press to Warsaw on November 21, reports that Bullitt, when asked if America would participate in a war against Germany, replied, "Undoubtedly yes,

but only if England and France strike first. The mood in the United States toward Nazism and Hitlerism is so tense that already there is a psychosis among Americans similar to that which existed before America declared war on Germany in 1917." 162 With such a declaration behind them, the Poles and the British and French supporting them have a good prospect that a war over Danzig with America's arms assistance will lead to Germany's defeat. All the more reason not to yield the slightest bit on the Danzig question in 1939. The question which arises here, despite all the terrible persecution of the Jews in Germany, is why U.S. President Roosevelt, and with him apparently the American nation, do not oppose with the same vehemence and severity the harassment of the Jews in the state of Poland, of which they are also aware, and why they accept the dictatorship in that country. It is also questionable why Ambassador Bullitt talks to his Polish colleague about the "insane expansion of Germany" as early as 1938, when it had not even begun by that time. These three criteria of anti-Semitism, dictatorship, and expansion should have forced the United States, if it had been solely a matter of 161 cash and carry: payment on collection, lend and lease: loan and lease 162 AA, 1940, No. 3, Document 4 174 , to confront other states again and again since 1919. But nothing of the sort has happened. The reason for the American-German differences, one can conclude from this, obviously also lies in a certain hostility to Germany on the part of the acting persons. The Munich Agreement, the German-British Friendship and Consultation Agreement of September 30, the Vienna arbitration award, the "Reichskristallnacht" and the still open Franco-Italian differences lead to a back-and-forth tug-of-war in Europe in the months that follow, in which there are no clear fronts. In France, there was dissatisfaction with the Munich Agreement, because it was believed that Germany had missed an opportunity to give up Alsace-Lorraine once again¹⁶³. In England, the Hitler-Chamberlain Declaration of September 30 is a document that obliges Germany for all time to consult the British government first in the event of new differences with third countries. England suggests that France conclude a similar agreement of friendship and consultation with Germany. After some negotiations, the governments in Paris and Berlin are ready to conclude the treaty in November 1938. Now there is barrage from Italy, the USA and within France. The "Duce" Mussolini claims Nice, Corsica, Tunis, and Djibouti from the French and consequently tries to keep the Germans from moving closer to France. On the other hand, it is U.S. President Roosevelt who advises all states, including France, at a press conference on November 15, shortly after the "Reichskristallnacht," to stay away from Germany. In France itself, it is some trade unions and the Communist Party who, on Moscow's instructions, attempt to thwart the visit of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to Paris and thus the signing of a Franco-German non-aggression pact. Despite all efforts to the contrary, the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs von Ribbentrop and Bonnet nevertheless signed a treaty in Paris on December 6, 1938, stating - that both countries no longer had any outstanding questions of a territorial nature, - that they solemnly recognized each other's present borders, and - that they intended to consult with each other in the future on all bilateral questions should the future development of these questions lead to international difficulties.¹⁶⁴ 163 Germany had already relinquished Alsace-Lorraine three times: at Versailles in 1919, in the Locarno Treaty in 1925, and after the Saar referendum in 1935 164 Treaty Ploetz, Part II, Volume IV, page 160 175 With the Hitler-Chamberlain Friendship and Consultation Paper and the similar Ribbentrop-Bonnet Treaty, Hitler, Chamberlain, and Dala-dier mutually agreed that Germany, England, and France would seek peaceful relations in the future and consult on sensitive issues. This should have led to a moderation of German foreign policy in the period that followed, but a misunderstanding or misdirection, or both, has the exact opposite effect. Before and after the signing of the Franco-German treaty on December 6 and 7, 1938, the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop held talks with his French colleague Bonnet on political subjects of interest to both sides: Italy's territorial claims on France, Germany's outstanding declaration of guarantee for the new borders of

Czechoslovakia, Franco-Soviet relations, and others. Of particular interest is the exchange of views on the French military treaties with the states of Eastern Europe behind Germany's back. Von Ribbentrop called France's treaty system an "annoying remnant of French encirclement policy." 165 He heard from Bonnet's replies that France expected Germany to exert a moderating influence on Italy with its territorial claims, and that it would give Germany a "free hand in Eastern Europe" in return. Here the German Foreign Minister heard or overheard something that Bonnet did not later confirm. Von Ribbentrop repeatedly reported to his staff that Bonnet had hinted at this to him. The chief interpreter of the Foreign Office, Dr. Paul Otto Schmidt, for example, who translated during the talks in Paris, reports to the press chief of the Office, Dr. Paul Karl Schmidt, already on the return trip to Berlin about the conversation of the two ministers: "The East European questions were fought out with hard sticks. The boss pretty much drummed up the good Bonnet, and he finally saved himself in the clinch. If we rein in the Italians for the French, Paris is not likely to encourage the Poles to be obstinate on the Danzig question." 166 Von Ribbentrop's impression or error had evidently been formed before the Paris conference. On November 20, a good two weeks before, the new French Ambassador Coulondre took up his duties in Germany. About the conversation of the new ambassador during his inaugural visit to the German foreign minister, the chief interpreter Schmidt, who was present, writes as a record: "Ribbentrop: an understanding is possible if the ... European states confine themselves to their real interests, thus France to its great colonial empire, England to its empire, and 165 Bonnet, page 135 166 Paul Karl Schmidt, page 29. The chief interpreter, Dr. Paul Otto Schmidt, reproduced the quoted conversation differently in a book in 1952, 14 years later. 176 Germany to its actual sphere of interest, namely the southeast of Europe. Coulondre: said that he saw the question in the same way." 167 That the French Foreign Minister Bonnet and his Ambassador Coulondre in Berlin saw it this way in November 1938 and wanted to give Germany a free hand in the East can also be inferred from the memoirs of Noel, the French Ambassador in Warsaw at the time. Noel describes that Bonnet at that time is on the point of dissolving the French mutual assistance pacts with Poland and with the Soviet Union 168. This is a pretty sure indication that France really wants to give Germany a free hand in Eastern Europe for a short time. But already in January 1939, during the visit of the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop in Warsaw and the attempt to solve the Danzig question by negotiation, France interferes again. Pledges of "free hand" are otherwise not uncommon at the time. In the same year 1938, for example, Italy and England concluded such an agreement 169. In it, England gives Italy a "free hand" in Abyssinia and vis-à-vis Spain and allows itself to be assured freedom of action in Central Europe. In 1935, France and Italy had also granted each other a "free hand" for very specific interests in the secret supplementary agreement to the Treaties of Rome. Nor can it be ruled out that von Ribbentrop was mistaken, and that French ministers and diplomats first hinted at the "free hand" and then denied it. After all, they had to offer something for Germany's influence against Italy's territorial claims. Whether truth or misunderstanding or error, the idea became so entrenched in von Ribbentrop's mind that he drew the wrong conclusions from it and advised Hitler accordingly in the following period. In the case of the Czech Republic only three months later and in the case of Poland nine months later, von Ribbentrop predicts to the "Führer" in this erroneous judgment that France will tolerate Germany's wars against her neighbors in Eastern Europe. In the subsequent occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, France keeps quiet for quite different reasons, giving the appearance that von Ribbentrop correctly understood the "assurance of a free hand" in Paris. But in the attack against Poland, Ribbentrop's error comes into full play. He advises Adolf Hitler incorrectly, and France declares war on the German Reich on its own initiative three days after the German attack against Poland. In the case of Poland, however, von Ribbentrop's advice can no longer be understood, since Bonnet previously informed him in a letter of July 1 that the policy of the free hand 167 Paul Karl Schmidt, page 32 168

Noel, pages 246 and 27 169 British-Italian Agreement of April 16, 1938, see Churchill World War, page 115 177 could not refer to subjecting parts of a neighboring country to military action¹⁷⁰. Otherwise, the months before the breakup of Czechoslovakia and before the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia are characterized by England's press campaigning against the Munich Agreement, and Winston Churchill never tires of beating the drum against the German Reich. Accordingly, the German press reacted increasingly anti-English. In December 1938 and the following January, rumors circulated in England that no one knew where they came from. It is said that Germany wanted to conquer Holland and Switzerland, occupy the oil fields of Romania, bomb London and other such things¹⁷¹. Thus the public opinion in England is already brought on temperature, still before someone in Germany has reason to think about such. In the rest, in Germany, France, England, in the USA, in the Soviet Union and in the Czechoslovakia around the bet further one arms up. The disintegration of Czechoslovakia The separation of the German-speaking population from the state of the Czechs and Slovaks after the Munich Conference does not solve the problem that this state has had since its foundation. The Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles and Ruthenians (Ukrainians) were granted rights in 1919 in the Pittsburgh Agreement and in the Saint-Germain Minority Agreement, which they now, like the Sudeten Germans now, finally want to have. On October 4, 1938, President Benes, who had created Czech rule in the multiethnic state of Czechoslovakia, resigned from office. He is succeeded by Prime Minister General Syrový, who now holds the two top posts for a short time. On November 29, 1938, Dr. Hacha became the fourth president of Czechoslovakia after General Syrový. He is an administrative lawyer and until then without any political activity or ambitions and also without the experience corresponding to the office. Before Dr. Hacha as President and Syrový as Prime Minister find the time to reshape the country, the peoples remaining in the state drift apart on their own. After the separation of the Sudetenland, the annexation of the Teschen region by Poland, the Vienna Arbitration and the reintegration of the Hungarians into their motherland, only six and a half million Czechs as well as two million Slovaks, almost half a million Ruthenians and small minorities belong to the rest of Czechoslovakia. This rump, it has been agreed between Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians, is now to be transformed into a federal state with internal autonomy for the three peoples. ¹⁷⁰ Paul Karl Schmidt, page 74 and ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 602 ¹⁷¹ Henderson, page 183 ¹⁷⁸ On October 4, 1938, the Ruthenians and on the 9th the Slovaks decide to set up their own state parliaments and thus to shape their own role in the new federal state. In Bratislava a provisional parliament and a provisional government for Slovakia were formed, and in Uzgorod a similar parliament and government for Carpatho-Ukraine. The Provisional Provincial Government for Slovakia is headed by Monsignor Dr. Tiso, the one for Carpatho-Ukraine also by a spiritual gentleman, Monsignor Dr. Voloshin. However, when the two presidents of the new "federal states" have the first state elections held, difficulties set in. In the election of the Ruthenians on February 2, 1939, 92% of the voters confirm Voloshin in his office and the internal autonomy he demanded for Carpatho-Ukraine. Three weeks later, on February 23, the vote is even more clearly in favor of Ti-so and autonomy, with 98%. Now Dr. Hacha and the Czech ministers in his cabinet fear that the rest of the republic could also break up into its parts. On March 6, Hacha therefore ordered Czech troops under General Prchala to march into Carpatho-Ukraine and, without consulting the new Ruthenian parliament, appointed the general as minister of the interior, finance and transport there. Prime Minister Voloshin is thus ousted as head of the Carpatho-Ukrainian government before he has even been able to form his first Ruthenian cabinet. Slovakia is no better off. On March 10, Hacha dismissed Monsignor Tiso as Minister for Slovak Affairs from the still joint state government of Czechoslovakia, and with him three other Slovak ministers. Thus the rule of the Czechs over the Slovaks, the Ruthenians and the minorities in the state as a whole is restored. On March 10, Dr. Hacha also dissolved the newly elected parliament of the Slovaks. He had

the Czech military occupy Bratislava, replaced the Slovak militia with Czech police¹⁷², shut down postal and railroad connections to the German Reich, and arrested a few state parliamentarians known to be separatists. Dr. Hacha crowns the disempowerment of the Slovaks by imposing on Slovakia a new state government under the former Minister of Education Sivak¹⁷³. But Sivak does not accept the office, and Hacha must ask Monsignor Tiso after a few days of chaos to take over the government over Slovakia again. From now on, Tiso is no longer willing to seek common ground with the Czechs in general and with the Prague government in particular in any form and to keep Czechoslovakia alive. The small German minority still remaining in the country was also rumbling. When the Sudeten territories were separated, not only were 350,000 Czechs ¹⁷² Henderson, page 201 ¹⁷³ Henderson, page 201 ¹⁷⁹ annexed to the German Reich against their will. Also 175,000 Germans in the linguistic islands within Czecho-Slovakia had to remain in this state which remained foreign to them. The Sudeten Germans, disappointed that they had not come "home to the Reich," no longer cooperated with the Czechs. The Czechs, for their part, now see the Germans as their enemy in their own country. Thousands of Sudeten Germans lose their jobs. For the time being, Czechoslovakia does not grant them and their families unemployment benefits, which is customary in the country. Thus, for many of the Germans remaining in Czechoslovakia, isolation is joined by economic hardship. Thus a third, albeit very small, ethnic group is on bad terms with the Czechs. This discord between the Czechs and the Sudeten Germans remaining in Czechoslovakia cannot, however, be used as a justification for the protectorate Germany later imposed on Czechoslovakia. Since taking office on November 29, 1938, Dr. Hacha, together with Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky, has endeavored to establish a prosperous relationship with the German Reich government. Whenever complaints from Berlin are directed to Prague, Hacha and Chvalkovsky hasten to comply with the German wishes. Nevertheless, Dr. Hacha does not succeed in changing the living conditions of the Sudeten Germans in his country in a short time. To all

internal turmoil in the rest of Czecho-Slovakia comes further pressure from outside. The Poles stand by what they see as their still unresolved territorial claims. On October 17, Warsaw claims a 5 by 20 kilometer border area southwest of Zakopane. Then it puts out feelers to Germany and Romania, in order to achieve with Berlin and Bucharest assistance a separation of the Carpatho-Ukraine and its annexation to Hungary¹⁷⁴. On October 22, Warsaw demands four more, albeit small, border corrections in the Tatra Mountains. Then the Polish government starts the however vain attempt to move Slovakia to the declaration of its independence¹⁷⁵. By October 30, the list of Polish demands on Czechoslovakia included, in addition to the aforementioned border adjustments, the area of Hrosov with coal mines and chemical factories, an unexploited mine field near Hermanice, the Ludwigsschacht mine near Petrwald, as well as the railroad and road route from Cerny to Zwardon at the Jablonka Pass, and the road near Lubkov in the Eastern Beskids. The Slovak regional government, obviously no longer sure that the Prague central government can protect it from the Polish territorial claims, turns to the German Reich government on October 31 and asks to protect Slovakia from the postponed claims of the Poles¹⁷⁶. On March 4, 1939, the Polish government begins to move troops to the border ¹⁷⁴ PAAA, R 29770 and Roos, Poland and Europe, page 382 ¹⁷⁵ PAAA, R 29770, sheet 76021 ¹⁷⁶ PAAA, R 29770, sheet 76088 ¹⁸⁰ gen. By March 12, there are now two full divisions in and outside the Teschen area¹⁷⁷. On the 13th, more troops from Poland march to the Carpatho-Ukrainian border. Furthermore, the Polish government urges the Romanian one to seize the railroad lines and the Romanian villages in Carpatho-Ukraine¹⁷⁸. The Hungarian government also makes further demands despite its land gain in the Vienna arbitration. This is not just about the historical claims that the Hungarians are asserting. It is also about a dispute between the Hungarians and the Ruthenians over the destruction of nature, which the Ruthenians are doing by cutting down the southern slopes of the forest

Carpathians. The Ruthenians are trying to earn foreign currency by exporting timber. They are exploiting the forests that used to store the precipitation in the slope to the valley of the Tisza River, causing the karstification of the Carpathians there and, as a consequence, the swampiness of the arable land in the Hungarian valley of the Tisza River. On March 8, 1939, Hungary offers Czechoslovakia the purchase of the forest regions in Carpatho-Ukraine¹⁷⁹. From about March 11, Hungary deploys troops on the borders with Eastern Slovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine¹⁸⁰. On March 13, reservists are called up throughout Hungary, and a Hungarian radio station announces that Hungarian troops will march on March 15 "to liberate their Ruthenian brothers." On March 14, two days before the German invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia, the first border skirmish occurs at Munkacs, where Hungarian troops capture and occupy a village on the Czechoslovak side. The Romanians also have nothing for their neighbors. On March 13, Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu informs the German ambassador in Bucharest that "Romania has no interest in the continued existence of the Czech Republic or Slovakia, and that it no longer feels bound to Prague in any way." ¹⁸¹ Knowing of the ambitions of the Poles and Hungarians, Hitler decided to take advantage of the collapse of the unloved neighboring country and to forestall the other interested parties. On March 12, 1939, he instructs Colonel General Keitel to have the designated army and air force units ready to march into the Czech Republic at 6 a.m. on March 15¹⁸². He obviously has a keen sense of timing for the unfolding of such dramas. ¹⁷⁷ PAAA, R 29934, folio 213499 ¹⁷⁸ PAAA, R 29934, folio 213380 ¹⁷⁹ PAAA, R 29934, folio 213537 ¹⁸⁰ PAAA, R 29934, folio 213499 ¹⁸¹ PAAA, R 29934, folio 213473 ¹⁸² Keitel, page 235 ¹⁸¹ The pressure from outside accelerates the decay within. On March 13, Slovak Prime Minister Tiso travels to Berlin by invitation to find out how the German Reich government would behave in the event of a declaration of independence by Slovakia. Hitler expresses that Germany has no interest in the possession of this country because, unlike the Czech Republic, it has never belonged to the German Reich. But Hitler asks Tiso, referring to the deployment of troops by the Hungarian army, whether Slovakia now wants to become independent or return to Hungary. "You see ", Hitler said " how things stand. I have no intentions on Slovakia. It has never belonged to Germany, and I will not commit a single German soldier to it unless it asks me for a guarantee of its borders. But then Slovakia must also say quite clearly whether it wants that or not." ¹⁸³ Tiso ends the conversation with thanks, but without a reply. He flew back to Bratislava the same day and the next day appeared before the Diet, which he had convened for this purpose before the trip to Berlin. Tiso's speech there was short and clear: "Since the Prague government had violated our autonomy with the act of violence on March 10, I am severing all ties that have existed between us up to now. By virtue of the right of self-determination of peoples, I hereby declare the independence of Slovakia. Those who approve of my decision may rise!" ¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ The reaction is clear. All deputies rise from their seats and sing the Slovak national anthem. Immediately after this historic meeting for Slovakia, President Tiso sends a telegram to the German Reich Minister of Aviation, Göring, in which he writes: "I ask you to bring the following to the attention of the Führer and Reich Chancellor: With strong confidence in you, the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor of the Greater German Reich, the Slovak State places itself under your protection. The Slovak state asks you to assume this protection. Tiso" ¹⁸⁵ Hitler's reply follows the same day: "I acknowledge receipt of your telegram and hereby assume the protection of the Slovak state. Adolf Hitler" A similar request for protection from the Ruthenians, also on March 14, becomes a foreign policy disaster for Monsignor Voloshin¹⁸⁶. Hitler does not respond to it. Instead, he had Horthy inform Hungary's head of state of the declaration of independence ¹⁸³ ADAP, Series D, Volume IV, Document 202 and IMT Volume XXXI, Document 2802-PS ¹⁸⁴ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, Page 65 ¹⁸⁵ ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 10 ¹⁸⁶ PAAA, R 29934 ¹⁸² of Carpatho-Ukraine and inform the Budapest government that it had a "free hand" in Carpatho-Ukraine. On March 18, 1939, Hungary

took over this small country, which belonged to it only historically, but not according to the ethnicity of the Ruthenians. Thus, on March 14, Czechoslovakia, which was only 20 years old, ended its existence as a multiethnic state. Hitler's reaction towards the Ruthenians fits badly with the theory, cultivated by many historians, that from the beginning of his career the dictator had in mind as a firm plan the conquest of an Eastern empire in the Ukraine as a so-called living space in the East. Hitler could have formed the basis for an all-Ukraine detached from Poland and Russia and associated with Germany with an independent Karpa-to-Ukraine under German protective rule. Hitler knows of the hatred of the approximately six million Ukrainians for the Poles, whose state they have had to belong to against their will since 1920, and he knows of the independence aspirations of the eastern Ukrainians in the Soviet Union. Instead of leaving the Carpatho-Ukraine and the Ruthenians to the Hungarians, Hitler could have accepted Monsignor Voloshin's request and annexed the first piece of Ukraine to the German dominion as a protectorate. He did not do it. Why? Hitler's disinterest in Carpatho-Ukraine in March 1939 can probably be taken as a sign that at that time he had no mature plans to seize the countries that were so far masters of the two largest parts of Ukraine, Poland and the Soviet Union. By all appearances, Hitler did not plan to attack Poland in March 1939. On March 14, 1939, Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. The death sentence for this creature of Saint-Germain's art was not pronounced in 1939, but shortly after its foundation with the breaking of Masaryk's and Benes's promise to build a country of equal peoples in the manner of Switzerland. With Czechoslovakia, the first of the three multi-ethnic states created by the World War II victors broke up. The Czechs, like the Poles soon after and later the Serbs, fail as the leading nations of these new artistic entities because they show themselves to be oppressors and not partners of the national minorities entrusted to them. Americans, British and French, as godfathers of multiethnic Czechoslovakia, never supervised and enforced the civil rights for the members of the other ethnic groups agreed with Czechs and Slovaks in 1919. They bear some of the blame for the disaster. The Czech Republic becomes a protectorate On March 13, 1939, when the Slovak President Tiso goes to see Hitler, the British Ambassador Henderson in Berlin contacts Secretary of State von Weizsäcker in the Foreign Office. He wants to know what Germany's or Hitler's intention is for the further course of events. Von Weizsäcker, who knows Hitler's plans for invasion, evades the question and says only: "Whatever is

Whatever is done will be done in a decent manner."187 Henderson, who has to represent Britain's claim to help shape the future of Czechoslovakia, warns von Weizsäcker in the strongest terms against British intervention in the event that the Munich Agreement is violated. This warning, as Hitler would later well note, remained a hollow threat. On the same day, Henderson urged his Czech colleague to suggest to his foreign minister in Prague that he travel immediately to Berlin and discuss Czechoslovak developments with the Reich government188. Whether under pressure from the British Ambassador Henderson in Berlin or of his own volition, on March 14 the former President of Czechoslovakia, and from that day only President of the Czechs, Dr. Hacha, became the third to address the German Chancellor. He asked for an appointment to visit him as soon as possible189, which was offered to him immediately. Still on the 14th in the afternoon, Dr. Hacha, accompanied by his foreign minister Chvalkovsky and his daughter, travels by train from Prague to Berlin. Hacha, who was already old and suffering from heart disease, no longer dared to travel by air. The president's failing health is also the reason why his daughter accompanies him. Dr. Hacha arrives late in the evening and is received in the Reich capital with all the ceremonial honors befitting a foreign head of state. In the hotel, Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop presents Hacha's daughter with a bouquet of yellow roses. In the room there was a bonbonniere as a present from Hitler for the lady. In the preliminary talk, which the Czech President has with the German Foreign Minister still in the hotel, Dr. Hacha tells von Ribbentrop that he has come "to put the fate of the Czech Republic into the hands of the Führer"190. All in all a

prelude for the following talks, which does not foresee anything bad. Von Ribbentrop reports to Hitler the hachasche remark about the fate of the Czechs to be put into the hands of the "Führer". He instructs the minister to immediately draft a German-Czech agreement for this purpose. When Dr. Hacha arrives at Hitler's, it is in the meantime 1.15 o'clock in the morning¹⁹¹; for the old and heart-suffering president an arduous strain. Hacha could not have been entirely unprepared for what was now coming his way. Already at the reception at the train station, the Czechoslovak ambassador had informed him that German troops had just advanced into Czech territory in Moravian Ostrava¹⁹². Otherwise, the German units intended for 187 Henderson, page 202 and AA 1939 No. 2, document 258 188 Henderson, page 205 189 PAAA ;R 29934, sheet 213455 190 IMT Negotiations, Volume X, page 291 191 March 15, 1939 192 Here German troops were intended for sealing the Polish-Czechoslovak border in march 184 occupation, while Dr. Hacha and Hitler faced each other, were already on their march to the border. Hitler had already set the invasion of German troops for 6 a.m. that morning two days earlier. President Hacha approaches Hitler with outstretched arms and opens the conversation with a torrent of pleasantries: "Your Excellency, you don't know how much I admire you. I have read all your works, and I have made it possible for me to hear almost all of your 193 speeches." 193 This may well have been so, since Hacha speaks fluent German. After the opening of the conference, it is again the Czech president who immediately takes the floor. After first declaring that he "does not shed a tear" for the now independent Slovaks, he comes to the German-Czech relationship: "For centuries our peoples have lived side by side and the Czechs have never had it so good as when they lived in harmony with the Germans. That is why I have asked you for a conversation, because I want to clear up the misunderstandings that may have arisen between our two countries. I place the fate of my people in your hands with the conviction that I could not place it in better ones." 194 Hitler replied in a friendly manner at first, but then he began to enumerate how the old Czechoslovakia had ruined German-Czech relations. During the reoccupation of the German Rhineland in 1936, the Prague government had offered Paris to stab Germany in the back with its army in the event of a Franco-German war. At League of Nations negotiations in Geneva, the Czechs had always displayed an anti-German attitude. In May 1938, his country had mobilized against the German Reich without Germany having given any reason to do so. At that time he, Hitler, had decided to draw consequences from the hostile attitude of Czechoslovakia¹⁹⁵. Even after the Munich Conference six months ago and after the separation of the Sudeten territories, nothing had changed in the old spirit of hostility. The Czech army, he said, was only out for revenge. "Thus," Hitler said, "the die was cast with me last Sunday. I gave the Wehrmacht the order to move into the rest of Czecho-Slovakia and incorporate it into the German Reich. Now there are only two possibilities: either the Czech army does not resist the advance of the German troops. In this case your people still have good prospects for the future. I will have been set to him an au to lay the path for the Polish troops who were to march to meet the Hungarian troops through Slovakia. 193 IMT Vol. XXXI pp. 139 ff 194 IMT Vol. XXXI pp. 139 ff 195 On May 30, 1938, Hitler gave the Chief of the OKW the order to prepare an operation of the Wehrmacht against Czechoslovakia "in order to smash Czechoslovakia in the foreseeable future ... to smash it." 185 grant tonomy far beyond anything it could have dreamed of in Austria's time. Or else their troops will resist. In that case they will be destroyed by all means at my disposal." 196 A negotiation between Hitler and Hacha no longer takes place. The "Führer" urges the Czech president to telephone immediately to his defense minister, Syrový, in Prague and order him to urge his troops and the population not to resist. The Luftwaffe commander-in-chief, Colonel General Goering, who is present, follows up and threatens to bomb Prague the next morning if he does not. Dr. Hacha gives in to the blackmail with a heavy heart and, as requested, instructs Syrový to stop any resistance from the Czech army. After this is clear, a ban on firing is also issued on the German side for the Wehrmacht units to cross the borders from 6 o'clock. Wild versions

of this nightly meeting circulate through the historiography. A fainting fit of the old Dr. Hacha and the help of Hitler's personal physician, who was present, certainly give material for it. However, the two people who took down the minutes of that evening, the German Legation Councilor Hewel and the chief interpreter Schmidt, report nothing of the sort. Schmidt later wrote of the encounter,

"Nevertheless, the turbulent scenes between

Hitler and Hacha that the foreign press wrote about then and later did not occur that night." 197

Hewel's minutes of the evening also portray a more pliant than agitated Dr. Hacha. The minutes state that Dr. Hacha introduced himself to Hitler as a former Viennese KuK administrative lawyer who had anyway "asked himself whether it was at all fortunate for Czechoslovakia to be an independent state." When Hitler opens to Dr. Hacha that in a few hours German troops will march into his country, Hacha asks only that his people be spared a "purchase of souls as in Austrian times," that is, that the Czechs should retain their own nationality. Hitler promises this to the Czechs¹⁹⁸. In the morning at 3:55 a.m. Hitler and Dr. Hacha proceed to sign the declaration which Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop had drafted at Hitler's behest after his first conversation with Hacha the previous evening: "... On both sides the conviction has been unanimously expressed that the aim of all efforts must be to secure peace, order and tranquillity in this part of Central Europe. 196 IMT Volume XXXI page 139 ff 197 Schmidt, Paul Otto, page 429 f 198 ADAP, Series D, Volume IV, Document 228 186 The Czechoslovak President declared that in order to serve this goal and to achieve final pacification, he confidently places the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich. The Fuehrer has accepted this declaration and expressed his determination that he will take the Czech people under his protection and guarantee them an autonomous development of their national life in accordance with their character." The execution of this extorted agreement goes surprisingly without any friction in the Czech Republic. The Wehrmacht occupied Bohemia and Moravia until the evening. On the same day Hitler appeared on the Hradschin and had Dr. Hacha introduce him to the members of the Czech government and the heads of the administration. Hacha remains head of the government until 1945, and the former German Foreign Minister von Neurath is placed before him as "Reich Protector" and Hitler's personal representative. Von Neurath is given the powers that until 20 years ago had been held by the Habsburg Crown's governors in the Untertanen Länder. The German imperial government takes over the departments of foreign policy, finance, economy and defense.

and defense under its own direction. Hacha's Czech government, with sovereignty over the interior, culture and other ministries, then only has the power to create an autonomous domestic life of its own. Accordingly, the police remained Czech. However, the German Gestapo¹⁹⁹ 200 establishes its own control and power regime in the country. The military is disarmed from 150,000 men to 7,000²⁰¹. The Czechs are no longer called up for military service, so that they later survive the Second World War unscathed in this respect. The dismissed Czech officers receive pensions on Hitler's instructions, which makes the moral defeat they suffered at least materially bearable. Vast amounts of military material and an efficient armaments industry are now additionally available for the further expansion of the German Wehrmacht. Despite the dismissal of almost 100,000 Czech soldiers, unemployment in the country subsequently falls.²⁰² The economy is stimulated by the annexation to the Reich. The reason is the German demand for the good quality goods offered by the Czechs. The crown remains the national currency alongside the Reichsmark. The Czech Republic becomes part of the German customs territory, but the external borders remain. German citizens continue to travel only with passports to this part of the Reich, which is now officially called the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" in Germany. 199 ADAP, Series D, Volume IV, Document 229 200 Secret State Police 201 Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 81, the Czech. Historian Miksche speaks of 16,000 soldiers 202 The difference between 150,000 former soldiers and the only discharged 100,000 is explained by the Slovak and Ruthenian soldiers, who

can no longer be provided with jobs in the Czech Republic. 187 This account, which should be inserted here, must not obscure the fact that the protectorate power Germany controlled the Czech Republic until 1945 with a contingent of 5,000 German police officers and thus nipped all anti-German efforts in the bud. An estimated number of 36 to 55,000 Czechs became victims of German rule during the six years, and this, too, was part of the German-Czech relationship. More than 90 percent of the denunciations and charges that led to the arrest of Czechs also came from Czechs²⁰³. On the day of the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Hungarians also occupied a part of the disintegrating Czechoslovakia with the Carpatho-Ukraine. But unlike the Czechs with the Germans, the Ruthenians resist the Hungarians militarily. Here, also unlike in the case of the Protectorate, there is no treaty and no consent of the Ruthenians, not even one extorted under pressure. And the Carpatho-Ukraine, unlike the Czech Republic in the Reich, does not get an autonomous status afterwards. Nevertheless, France, Great Britain, the USA and the Soviet Union do not react to the annexation of the Hungarians. The protest of the four mentioned states is directed in these days alone against the action of the German Reich government. The Guarantee That Never Existed With the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, the "Führer" Hitler commits a crime against the Czechs, which will be evaluated in the following paragraph. Before that, a look at a detailed aspect: the French refer to the occupation of the Rest of Czechoslovakia from the very beginning as a breach of the Munich Agreement. Historiography has adopted this view of things. Until today, German higher school students have to learn it that way. In the school history book "Unsere Geschichte" (Our History) volume 4 by Diesterweg, for example, it says about the occupation of Czechoslovakia: "He (Hitler) had broken ... the treaty solemnly signed in Munich"²⁰⁴. The further accusation that has found its way into the historiography is that Hitler, with the occupation, also violated the guarantee given in Munich for the new borders of Czechoslovakia. Anyone who reads the treaty and the supplement to that guarantee quickly realizes that this is not true. The Munich Treaty in its eight articles regulates only and really only the "conditions and modalities" of the cession of the Sudeten German territories, as there are: Times and zones for the German occupation in stages, a referendum, the formation of an international committee for the final determination of the borders, the option right for the affected territorial inhabitants²⁰³ FAZ of August 30, 1997 from the book "Hyeny" by Jaroslav Pospisil²⁰⁴ Diesterweg 1988, page 123 188 and the release of the Sudeten Germans from the police and military service of Czechoslovakia. These eight articles all in Germany's favor Germany did not violate with her illegal occupation of Czechoslovakia, thus did not break the agreement. Nor did Germany violate a guarantee, because no guarantee had been given. The "Addendum to the Munich Agreement" guaranteeing the new borders, as already described, provides for the prior settlement of the Hungarian and Polish minority questions. But the Polish question had not been settled by the day of the German invasion. And the Reich government consequently did not issue such a guarantee. The usefulness of a guarantee for the new borders of Czechoslovakia was in any case disputed at the turn of the year 1938 to 1939. None of the nations that signed the Treaty of Munich wants to stand by their guarantee announcement in the period after that and really give the guarantee of inviolability of the new borders. Each initially defers to the other. After the Vienna arbitration in November 1938, the government in Paris asks the one in London to join it in guaranteeing the new borders of Czechoslovakia, reduced by the Hungarian territories, as definitive. On November 14, British Prime Minister Chamberlain rejected the French proposal²⁰⁵. As a result, the French government also refrains from such a guarantee. From January 11 to 14, 1939, Chamberlain was in Rome to discuss the trouble spots in Europe with his colleague Mussolini. Chamberlain and Mussolini agreed that conditions in Czechoslovakia were too unstable at the moment to implement the British and Italian guarantees announced in Munich²⁰⁶. In spite of its own misgivings, the British government sent a note to Berlin on February 8, 1939, asking whether the German government would not finally give

the guarantee it had promised for the new borders of Czechoslovakia. But the state of affairs was still the same in February. The minority question of the Poles is still unresolved and thus the time for guarantees from Berlin and Rome has not yet come. On February 28, two weeks before the German-Hungarian invasion, the Reich government gives the governments in London and Paris an answer to the English inquiry of February 8 regarding that still open guarantee. In its reply note, the Reich government states that international guarantees at this time could encourage the government of Czechoslovakia to regulate the domestic problems of its country with a tougher hand again²⁰⁷. That this assumption was not off the mark is shown by the next fortnight. On March 6, General Prchalá marched with Czech soldiers into the Carpatho²⁰⁵ Nicoll, page 129 206 Nicoll, page 126 and Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume III, Document 500 (3) 207 PAAA, R 29934, sheet 213567 189 Ukraine and "replaced" a couple of ministers there, and on March 10 the Prague central government dissolved the newly elected Diet of the Slovaks. The aforementioned note from the German Imperial Government ends with the sentence, "The German

Imperial Government therefore believes that it is necessary first to await a clarification of the internal development of Czechoslovakia and the resulting improvements in the relations of this country with the surrounding states before the time has come for a further statement." ²⁰⁸ Here, then, the Reich Government rejects for the time being a German guarantee of the existence and borders of Czechoslovakia, which is in the process of disintegration. Viewed in the light of day, none of the four governments represented at Munich thus gave a guarantee. The French and the British may have wanted to and then never did. They had only "agreed to accede to an international guarantee" on September 19, 1938, when they made their memorable demand on the Prague government to cede the Sudetenland. In that "Supplement to the Munich Agreement" concerning the guarantee, they then signed again that they "stand by their offer of September 19, 1938." Thus, in writing and in contract, they never expressed more than their willingness to make such a guarantee. For this reason, on the day of the German invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain also speaks before the House of Commons in London of Czechoslovakia as a state whose borders England "intended to guarantee." None of the four Munich powers ever guaranteed Czechoslovakia's new borders, including Germany. The Occasion for World War II With the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia and its transformation into the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia," Hitler won another bloodless victory and land acquisition. But this is for the first time a gain outside the hitherto generally accepted legitimacy of bringing German populations "home to the Reich." Hitler attempts to give the annexation the appearance of legitimacy with the Protectorate Treaty signed by Dr. Hacha. The treaty is indeed binding in the sense of international law, but since it is extorted, it lacks, like the previously extorted Treaty of Versailles, it lacks moral binding force. Despite the collapse of the state structure of Czechoslovakia, the annexations of the rest of Czechoslovakia and Carpatho-Ukraine are a crime against the right of Czechs and Ruthenians to live according to their own self-determination, each in their own state. The protectorate over Czechoslovakia is and remains an injustice, despite the extorted Hacha signature under the Protectorate Treaty, even if the Munich Agreement was not thereby broken and even if the British, Germans, Italians and French had never given a ²⁰⁸ PAAA, R 29934, sheet 213568 190 declaration of guarantee for Czechoslovakia. This is and remains the case, although Britain is doing the same thing with Egypt at the same time, and although France may yet have granted Germany a "free hand in the East." This injustice would have been a reason for Britain, France, the USA and the Soviet Union in the spring of 1939 to declare war on the Germans and the Hungarians to liberate the Czechs and Ruthenians. But this did not happen. Moreover, with the occupation of the Czech Republic Hitler broke his often given word. In the period before that he had solemnly and publicly proclaimed on several occasions: "I do not want any Czechs at all" or "Germany will leave

Czechoslovakia alone after handing over the Sudeten territories" and the like in the same spirit. After the Munich Conference, he had given Chamberlain his word to refrain from going it alone in such matters in the future. He had promised the British prime minister by signature: "to deal also with other questions concerning our two countries according to the method of consultation and to remove possible causes of disagreement. Last but not least, in the Franco-German treaty of December 6, 1938, he had also promised the French "to consult among themselves in the future on all bilateral questions if the future development of these questions should lead to international difficulties." But even before the self-dissolution of ailing Czechoslovakia, Hitler, von Ribbentrop, and his Secretary of State von Weizsäcker let Paris and London know that the Reich government did not want any further interference from that side in the changes still possible in Central Eastern Europe; and this despite the two consultation agreements with Britain and France. Paris and London, however, interpret these agreements as giving them a say in all questions concerning Czechoslovakia's future. Hitler, however, interpreted the texts literally and took the position that the Slovaks' request for a German protectorate was an exclusively German-Slovak matter and the annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine an exclusively Hungarian one. To justify the occupation of the Czech Republic, Hitler argued afterwards with the instability that this residual entity had brought to the region. But this reason is a pretext. As his true reasons one must suspect the following: First, Hitler, who grew up in Habsburg, obviously does not perceive the Czechs and Czechia as completely independent. For him, they have been part of the German Empire for about a thousand years, except for the last 20 years, and separated from Versailles only by malice. Hitler thinks and acts in this question as it is quite common at that time. The Czechs and the Poles, for example, used exactly the same arguments in Saint-Germain and Versailles in 1918 to have a number of territories annexed to their new states on the basis of historical affiliation, even though the "annexed" populations were neither Czechs nor Poles and obviously did not want to become so. Hitler expressed this thinking six weeks after the annexation in a Reichstag speech, when he emphasized that the Greater German Reich, even with the Czech Republic, consisted only of areas that had belonged to it since ancient times. Second, Hitler obviously harbors a feeling of revenge for the Czechs. He has never forgotten how they, as the "leading nation", dealt with the Sudeten Germans in their country. Generosity, forgiving and forgetting are not among Hitler's qualities and habits. The third reason is directly related to the security of the Reich. Hitler knows the danger that Czechoslovakia has posed to Germany so far. He has not forgotten the talks of the Czechs and the French in 1936, during which Prague offered Paris arms assistance against Germany's "back." He has knowledge of the briefing visits of Soviet air force officers to airfields in Czechoslovakia. And he also repeatedly quotes the French Minister of Aviation, Cot, who had expressed in an interview as recently as the previous year "that joint attacks by the French and Czech air forces could very quickly destroy all German production facilities." ²⁰⁹ Cot also originated the catchphrase about Czechoslovakia as an aircraft carrier against Germany. Hitler wanted to banish the danger at Germany's back for all time to come. For this purpose, however, it is enough for him to make Czechoslovakia a protectorate and to disarm it down to 7,000 soldiers. The fourth and probably strongest motive is closely related to the last one. Hitler believes, as if in an obsession, that sometime in the next few years there will be a new confrontation between Germany and Italy on the one hand and the colonial powers Britain and France on the other. Hitler's thoughts to this effect, which he revealed for the first time on November 5, 1937, and then again on May 28, 1938, in speeches to the Reich Foreign Minister and the top generals of the Wehrmacht, revolve in essence around securing food in the coming decades for the population that will continue to grow in Germany. In both speeches, Hitler urges the return of the colonies annexed by England and France in 1918 or replacements for them in Eastern Europe. As a result, he sees a new war with the aforementioned world war winner states as highly probable and therefore fears the militarily strong Czechoslovakia as a potential enemy in the

enemy camp. 209 Interview of July 14, 1938 in NEWS CHRONICLE 192 Hitler argues quite similarly, though in the other direction, in a conversation on May 21, 1938, when he gives Colonel General Keitel the task of investigating the possibilities of a war against Czechoslovakia. He speaks of the "untenable situation ... once it comes to a confrontation with Bolshevism," and in this context refers to Czechoslovakia as a "springboard for the Red Army and 210 a landing place for its air force. "210 Whether Hitler's fears relate to Great Britain and France in the west or to the Soviet Union in the east, for him Czechoslovakia, with its 45 army divisions and a respectable air force, is always a potential adversary only a 40-minute flight from Berlin. Thus, Czechoslovakia becomes the first loser of a great war that has not even broken out yet. A fifth point should not be forgotten. It did not induce Hitler to annex the rest of Czechoslovakia, but it facilitated his decision to do so. This is his false assessment of the British and the French. The Ribbentrop interpretation of the Paris talks of December 6 and 7, 1938, and the error that the French had promised Germany "a free hand in Eastern Europe" if that in turn slowed down the Italians in their territorial demands, obviously relieved Hitler of all caution. In addition, there was a series of German-British ambassadorial talks in which the German side gave the impression that the British government recognized "a German interest in the Czech area "211 . By taking Dr. Hacha and his remaining territory by surprise, Hitler, the politician, tactically and in the short term, takes advantage of the opportunity that the disintegration of Czechoslovakia offers him almost by itself. However, with this well-suited success he missed at the same time the other, the strategic and long-term opportunity, which the plight of the Czechs and the concession of Hacha would probably also have offered him. Hitler

could have had with great certainty that night of March 14-15, 1939, an "ideal annexation" with a peace and friendship treaty, with economic and customs union, with disarmament of the Czech army and the promise to coordinate the foreign policy of the Czech Republic with that of the German Reich in the future. But Hitler missed the chance that was given to him here. The "Führer" commits a crime against the Czechs' right to self-determination and breaks his often given word not to touch the Czech Republic. With this breach of word Hitler gambles away the credit he still enjoys in France, England and the USA. What is incomparably worse for Germany, Hitler's subjugation of Bohemia and Moravia makes the governments of the three countries mentioned above intend to wage another war with Germany at the next suitable opportunity. The annexation of the 210 Keitel, Page 222 211 AA 1939 No. 2, Document 258 193 rest of Czechoslovakia is the occasion for this, and the Danzig question then gives the British and French the necessary opportunity. The reactions of foreign countries to the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia by Wehrmacht forces are fatal for the German Reich. England first lets the Czechs fall, but then it erupts in indignation against Germany. On March 15, the day Czechoslovakia collapses, the day Dr. Hacha visits Hitler, the British government first withdraws its Munich

Promise of Protection from Czechoslovakia. Prime Minister Chamberlain announces to the House of Commons in London that afternoon: "In our view the situation has changed radically since the Slovak Diet declared the independence of Slovakia. This declaration had the effect that the state, whose borders we intended to guarantee, broke up from within and thus came to an end. Accordingly, the situation... which we always considered to be only temporary, ceased to exist. His Majesty's Government can in- 212 consequence no longer feel bound by this obligation." 212 With this, the British government builds up an argument for its own benefit that it does not want to apply to Germany in this way. When the German government also argued that Czechoslovakia, which had been given new borders at the Munich Conference, had ceased to exist on March 14, 1939, and that the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia by German troops could therefore not be a violation of the spirit or the letter of the Munich Treaty, the British government suddenly took a different view 213. From now on, it accuses the

Reich government of breaking the Munich Agreement. The morning after the Chamberlain Declaration, which annuls the promise of protection, London learns of the Hitler-Hacha Protectorate Treaty and of the German invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia. The indignation about both is so enormous in Parliament and the press that Prime Minister Chamberlain immediately takes sides with the Czechs again. The day after, on March 17, he made a second speech in Birmingham, putting an end to his previous policy of understanding with the German Reich. To put his policy of yesterday in perspective once again, he begins his new speech with a description of the old Czechoslovakia before the cession of the Sudetenland. He calls it "a problem that has existed since the Treaty of Versailles, and which could have been solved long ago if only the statesmen of the last 20 years had had a fuller and more enlightened conception of their duty. It had been treated like a long-neglected disease 212 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 82 213 AA 1939 No. 2, p. VIII 194. Then only a surgical operation helped to 214 save the patient." 214 After this review, Chamberlain changes the subject to the "proud and brave people of the Czechs," without remembering that it was precisely the "proud and brave" Czechs who did the "neglected evil" just lamented. Chamberlain rightly rebukes the fact that Hitler, who had recently affirmed that "he did not want Czechs," had now annexed them to the German Empire. Then the English Premier rhetorically masterfully builds a bridge of thought from German action in the Rhineland in 1936, in Austria and in the Sudeten territories in 1938, through the Czechs in 1939, to an uncertain future, to which he asks whether Germany is then trying to dominate the globe. With this turn of his speech, Chamberlain reproaches the hitherto accepted policy of "home to the Reich" for obviously being only the long run-up to German world domination. From now on, and this should be inserted here, the politics and propaganda of all countries that later became Germany's opponents again made use of this catchy formula that had already been used in the First War. The specter of German world domination begins to haunt even before Hitler approaches the idea of going to war with his neighbor Poland over Danzig. Back to Chamberlain's speech in Birmingham. The British prime minister justifiably accuses Hitler of violating the right of self-determination of peoples in the Czech Republic, to which Hitler himself had always referred up to now. Chamberlain concludes his speech with a warning against confusing Britain's yearning for peace with a lack of strength on the part of the British. Britain, he says, is prepared to accept a war "as a challenge to the exhaustion of its strength." 215 With the Czech occupation of March 15, 1939, and the Chamberlain speech of the 17th, Britain and the German Reich are once again on a collision course. Objectively, Chamberlain was right in his accusations of breach of trust and violation of the Czechs' right to self-determination. But to mention England's desire for peace is pure hypocrisy. The British protectorate over Egypt and Sudan, sovereign states since 1922, for example, is no different from the German protectorate over Czechoslovakia. In 1924, the Egyptian government asked the British in vain to withdraw its troops. In 1925, England forces the separation of the two parts of the state of Egypt and Sudan. In 1926, the British block the re-election of Egypt's head of government, Saghlul Pasha, and in 1928, they again remove the head of government, this time Nahäs Pasha, from office. Finally, in 1936, because of an alleged threat from Italy, England imposes a protectorate on Egypt, with troop stationing, berths for the 214 British War Bluebook, Document 9 215 British War Bluebook, Document 9 195 English navy, and the right to defend English interests on Egyptian territory. England, with this compulsory protectorate over sovereign Egypt, still young in 1939, is hardly the moral authority that may make itself judge of Germany in the case of the Czech Republic. But the English government, which is not bothered by France's breaches of the peace with Germany in 1923 and 1925, nor by the four conquests of the Poles in their neighboring countries in 1920, 21 and 38, nor by the Memel annexation of the Lithuanians in 1923, nor by the annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine by the Hungarians, which has just taken place, this English government reacts in the case of the occupation of Czechia in a decidedly sensitive manner towards Germany. In truth, the issue

here is not only Hitler's broken promises and not only the Czechs' right to self-determination. At stake here is the balance of power on the Continent and a still dormant Anglo-German problem, the former German colonies. This will be dealt with later in this book. The German Reich has become a bit too strong with the Protectorate of Czechoslovakia. This contradicts the centuries-old principle of English foreign policy of not tolerating any superior power on the Continent. The English opposition leader Churchill had already expressed this in concrete terms a year earlier during the visit of Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, when he told the guest from Germany: "If Germany becomes too powerful, we will destroy it again."²¹⁶ Hitler's ruthless approach to the Czechs brought forces to bear that Germany was no match for, as the next few years would show. England would have had a reason to go to war with Germany here to protect the Czechs and as punishment for broken promises. But the London government, in spite of its grandiose naval superiority, even in combination with the land and air power of France, in spite of the 30 Soviet divisions offered to it, and with the army divisions which the Czechs themselves can provide for the protection of their country, does not yet feel itself strong enough for a campaign of arms. So she tells the Czechs that the promise of protection from Munich is no longer valid and lets the occasion pass unused. Thus, peace is once again compulsory. If there had been no such obligation to keep the peace after the causes and reasons for war had passed, then the German Reich would also have had the right at any time, after the imposed Versailles Treaty, to instigate new wars on its own initiative at a favorable opportunity in order to redeem the injustice it had suffered. The fact that England, just like France, after letting this occasion for war pass, is now setting the course for a German-Polish conflict over Danzig in English-Polish and in French-Polish secret talks, can no longer be justified with ²¹⁶ v. Ribbentrop, Page 97 196 Czechia. It is a separate attempt to get into a war with the German Reich after all, with the help of Poland, after its own rearmament has taken place. But this will be the subject of the last part of the book. Other countries also rejected the annexation of the Czech Republic as a protectorate to Germany, each in its own particular way. France protests to Germany and very soon begins to put out feelers to Poland and Russia to coordinate with Warsaw and Moscow for a war with Germany, a war which is not yet on the agenda of the German government. Poland, hitherto Germany's accomplice in the division of Czechoslovakia, quickly changed sides and began the aforementioned secret talks in Paris and London.

The Soviet Union condemns the German invasion and takes the legal view that the Hitler-Hacha agreement is unconstitutional because it was reached without the consent of the parliament in Prague. But Moscow, too, is more concerned with power and advantage than with morality and law. Thus, the Soviet government raises no objections to the simultaneous annexation of Carpatho-Ukraine by the Hungarians. This little piece of Czechoslovak Ukraine has always been an irritant to Moscow as the basis of an all-Ukrainian movement. Moscow's Foreign Minister Litvinov therefore also notes the conquest of Carpatho-Ukraine, as reported, with "undisguised satisfaction"²¹⁷. Thus, all neighboring states of Czechoslovakia and not only Germany wanted the dissolution of this Versailles art product. Thus all the signatory powers of Munich and not only Germany have

never gave a guarantee for the existence of Czechoslovakia and so all allies abandoned Czechoslovakia when it got into trouble. Only the Soviet Union obviously would have liked to help. Even the USA, which had been one of the constructors of the problematic state of Czechoslovakia in Saint-Germain, where a few ethnic groups had been assigned to the Czechs and Slovaks against their national right of self-determination and against their will, now reacted indignantly to the German infringement of the Czechs' right of self-determination. Within only a few days, U.S. President Roosevelt decrees to raise tariffs on German goods, to introduce an amendment to revise American neutrality in Congress, and to massively relieve the English navy by the American one. But this will be described in detail only in connection with the later dispute over Danzig. Roosevelt also sends notable letters to Hitler and

Mussolini "out of concern for all the other peoples of the entire Western Hemisphere." 217 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 51 197 As the letter introduction states. He asks Hitler and Mussolini in the letters to promise him not to attack 31 named states, up to and including Syria and Persia, for the next 10 or better 25 years²¹⁸. Roosevelt lets the letters be given to the press even before they are handed over to Hitler and Mussolini; an obvious attempt to call the 31 named states under the protection of the USA in a media-effective way and to bring himself back into the conversation in Europe. Hitler takes advantage of the diplomatically clumsy act of the President and has the states addressed, except for the Soviet Union, Poland, England, France and the countries occupied by these powers, asked whether they felt threatened by Germany and whether they had asked the USA for their protection. The states asked all answered "no" twice. A diplomatic triumph for Hitler, an equal failure for the president of the USA. Hitler pays Roosevelt back for the premature publication of the letter with the publicity of his answer by replying to the letter with a Reichstag speech broadcast on the radio²¹⁹. He refers to the answers of the allegedly threatened states and says about the fear of war of the mentioned peoples invoked in Roosevelt's letter: "For example, after the peace treaty of Versailles from the year 1919 to 1938 alone fourteen wars have been waged, in which Germany, however, was not involved in any case, but states of the western hemisphere, in whose name Mr. President Roosevelt also takes the floor. In addition, however, there have been 26 violent interventions and sanctions carried out with bloody force in the same period. Germany has also been wholly uninvolved in these." As if in mockery, Hitler adds the question why he should also guarantee the security of the Republic of Ireland, when the Irish Prime Minister de Valera had just complained publicly that his country was suffering from England's continual aggressions. "But how," Hitler continued at a later point in his speech, "does President Roosevelt come to expect the German Head of State in particular to make a statement to him without the other governments also being invited to make this statement of their policy? ... Then ... with equal justification, we could ask the President of the American Republic what goals American foreign policy is pursuing, and what intentions underlie this policy, let us say, for example, toward the Central and South American states. In this case, Mr. Roosevelt will certainly invoke the Monroe Doctrine and reject such a demand as an interference in the internal affairs of the American continent. Exactly the 218 Roosevelt note of April 14, 1939, see ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 200 219 Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939, see Domarus, Volume 2, pages 1166ff 198 same doctrine we Germans now advocate for Europe, and in any case for the sphere and for the concerns of the Greater German Reich." Apart from Roosevelt's Ireland blunder, the President also lists countries that are still colonies. This unmasks the phrase about "concern" for nations. In this speech to the Reichstag, Hitler also dismissed the annexation of the Czech Republic by saying that it merely restored a state of affairs that had already existed for almost a millennium. This self-confident answering speech may have pleased many German listeners in April 1939, but it is a cheap triumph. It is, and this weighs disproportionately more heavily, also a rebuff that Roosevelt does not forget Hitler. Hitler himself chalks up the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia as a personal success of historical significance, especially since he succeeded in this as a move without war. The consequences he draws from the latter circumstance, however, are fatal. He interprets the inaction of the governments in London, Moscow and Paris as a sign of weakness and their inability to mount a defense. It is obvious that this error was bound to occur to him. Ambassadors Francois-Poncet and Henderson had repeatedly threatened French and British military intervention, and then nothing happened. In the six months that follow, Hitler will stumble over this error of his in the negotiations for the return of Danzig. Hitler's miscalculation also relates to the inner circle of his foreign policy advisers. Former Foreign Minister von Neurath and Minister Göring advise Hitler against occupying the Czech Republic and predict that the World War II victors will respond militarily. Both are mistaken. Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, on the other hand, predicts that the British and

French will not act despite their threats. Von Ribbentrop is "right" with his bad advice in this case, which fatally strengthens his position with Hitler. Six months later in the dispute with Poland, von Ribbentrop advises the "Führer" a second time in the same way. This time, however, his predictions regarding the reactions from Paris and London were off the mark, and within three days the dispute with Poland also turned into a war with France and Great Britain. Adolf Hitler, as far as the annexation of the Czech Republic was concerned, certainly did not seek war for war's sake. But since his speech to a group of the highest Wehrmacht generals in November 1937 it is known that he wanted to make Czechia together with German Austria a part of the German Reich²²⁰. And for this he has obviously been ready all the time, ²²⁰ The Hitler speech of November 5, 1937 ¹⁹⁹ recorded in the Hoßbach minutes also to wage a war. It is noteworthy that already in November 1937 Hitler speaks only of the Czech Republic when he reveals his intention to the generals, and not of Czechoslovakia. It can be concluded that he wants to reunite the old German Empire of the last thousand years into one state. And neither Slovaks nor Ruthenians belonged to this empire. The annexation of the Sudeten territories was only an intermediate goal for Hitler in pursuit of this intention. But the struggle for this intermediate goal was a legitimate action for the foreign countries and the German citizens. It was the struggle for the right of self-determination of the peoples for the Sudeten Germans. The forced repatriation of the Czechs to "their old empire," on the other hand, met with astonishment in Germany and led to indignation abroad. Hitler's superfluous act of violence against the Czechs prompts the British, French, Soviets and Americans to seek a suitable opportunity to wage war with Germany. The fact that the Poles are still on the side of the Germans and the Hungarians in the partition of Czechoslovakia is carefully ignored. In the next act of the drama, the Poles are a very welcome partner for the British and the French in order to confront Germany with the ominous choice of either renouncing the long overdue Danzig question and protecting the German minority in Poland, or going to war and then opening it. The occupation of Czechoslovakia as an impetus for this further development was entirely on Hitler's account. The return of Memel The last "Anschluss" before the war falls back into Germany's lap. On March 22, 1939, the Lithuanian government returned the Memelland, which had been seceded in 1920, to the German Reich without any resistance. However, this strip of land between the Memel River in the south and the town of Nimmersatt in the north, which so ideally complements the small Lithuania according to its geography, was never Lithuanian in the true sense of the word before 1920. This strip of land was inhabited around the year 1000 by the Cures, a tribe belonging to the Latvian people. At that time, the Lithuanians were the next but one neighbor to the east, behind the settlement area of the Szamaities. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Livonian Order of the Brothers of the Sword from the north and the Teutonic Order from the south missionized and conquered the Baltic territories along the Baltic coast on behalf of the Pope and the Emperor. The Memel is the river where both orders meet. The Livonian Order, coming from

the north to subjugate the territory of the Cures from 1158 onwards, first creates the bridge between the two Order territories with what is later called the Memeland. Later, the connection of the Order's territory in the direction of Latvia north of the city of Memel breaks off again, and in 1328 Memeland is annexed to East Prussia, which in the meantime has become German. The Cures and the Germans there

have in the meantime mixed to form a 200 Map 14: The Memel area in the time of the secession people and the Kurish has died out as a language in this area. Thus, the Memeland becomes German already around the year 1200. In 1252, where the Danje River flows into the Baltic Sea, at a place called klajs peda, friars founded their first castle and a German settlement right next to it. Klajs peda is Curonian-Latvian and literally means "flat place". The fact that the "Memelburg" of the Knights of the Order was the first castle at this place can be concluded from the fact that the Cures built their castles only on

heights. Thus, the present name Kleipada for the formerly German town of Memel refers to a Curonian place name and not, as it seems, to a Lithuanian castle in prehistoric times. From the time of the founding of the castle and the town until 1409, Memel was attacked, conquered and burned down a good half dozen times by Lithuanians and Cures, and each time rebuilt by Germans. In 1411 in the First Peace of Thorn and in 1422 in the Peace of Lake Melno the Order land north of the Memel is deprived of its hinterland; the eastern part falls to Lithuania and the Memelland receives the borders, which it then has unchanged until 1945. Lithuanians and Germans thus become direct neighbors from 1411. Already at the time of the first German settlement, baptized Lithuanians migrate from the east to the territory of the Order, albeit in small numbers. They are exposed to persecution in Lithuania, which is still pagan at that time, and seek protection from the Order. Three centuries later, after the Reformation and the transformation of East Prussia and the Memelland from an ecclesiastical state of the Order into a secular duchy, the population in the Memelland changed once again. The religious pressure of the churches and regents in France, the Netherlands, Scotland, Switzerland, Austria and Catholic Lithuania leads to the immigration of many people who are allowed to continue to stand by their faith in tolerant Prussia. These Dutch, Scots, Huguenots, Salzburger and Lithuanians contribute to the folk character of the Memellanders. The settlers and the religious refugees from Lithuania must be mentioned here because of their later political importance. They retain their mother tongue, but they are Protestants, unlike the people of their country of origin. At the end of the First World War, these "Little Lithuanians" constitute 48% of the resident population in the Memelland. Despite the name and despite the mother tongue, the majority of the Kleinlitauer feel that they belong to the German cultural circle and to the German Reich. In a referendum on "family languages" in 1922, 71,156 Memellanders professed German and 67,259 Lithuanian, but only 2.2% of the Lesser Lithuanians wished to change reading and writing instruction in schools from German to Lithuanian²²¹. German is their second now ancestral language. In 1919 in Versailles the two states Poland and Lithuania claim the Memelland for themselves. Both see in the collapse of the defeated German Empire the chance to "round up" their newly formed countries at the expense of Germany. The Poles wanted all of Lithuania including Memelland for themselves, the Lithuanians wanted Memelland with the city of Memel as a gateway to the nearby Baltic Sea. The Lithuanian justification, which is on hand in Versailles, states that 600 years ago the Memelland was part of the Greater Lithuanian Empire. It is true that the Memelland was once an integral part of East Prussia under the fiefdom of the Polish-Lithuanian Dual Monarchy. But with the same quality of argument, Germany today could claim dominion over Hungary. The Allied victorious powers do not fulfill either Poland's or Lithuania's claims to the Memelland. They reject in writing the Lithuanian government's thesis that the Memel area was formerly Lithuanian in the Mantelote to the Versailles Treaty of June 19, 1919. German attempts to hold on to the Memelland are also rebuffed by the victorious powers. Three attempts by the German Reich Government and the Memelland People's Assembly in May, August and September 1919 were rejected on the grounds that, according to the Treaty of Versailles, the Memel region was no longer part of the German Reich and that it was therefore not possible to negotiate with Germany in this matter. As of 1920, the victorious Versailles powers take the Memel region under joint rule in a so-called condominium and have it administered by ²²¹ Arnaszus, Page 54 202 France. On February 14, 1920, the French occupation force, a scant battalion, arrives in Memel. Despite these changes, the Memellanders remain German citizens. The German administration continues its work without interruption, as do the Reichsbank and the Deutsche Reichsbahn. The postal service is made independent. It uses French stamps with overprint in German. Otherwise, the Memelland becomes a separate, closed customs territory. Thus, for three short years, this new artificial entity has no citizenship of its own and no currency of its own. But it is enclosed all around by customs borders and flies its own flag. The Memelland is separated from Germany and is

not awarded to any other state²²². This separation is probably the most senseless and ridiculous act of revenge of the victors; a condition that formally calls for change. In Lithuania, the demand for the Memelland remains on the agenda. Thus, on November 11, 1921, the Lithuanian Constituent Assembly decided to "unite" the Memelland with Lithuania.²²³ A little over a year later, from January 10 to 16, 1923, Lithuanian gunmen entered the Memelland and drove out the French. In the face of 5 to 6,000 attacking Lithuanians, the French occupation force of about 200 soldiers is also unwilling to sacrifice itself for a piece of foreign land. The Permanent Conference of Ambassadors of the victorious powers lodged a protest, and the Lithuanian government hastened to inform it that what was happening was an "act of desperation on the part of the people of the Memelands." The government in Kaunas, however, refuses to hand over the Memelland, and the conference of ambassadors in Paris, after briefly balking, bows to the violence. It first demands that a referendum be held on the future of the Memelland, but when the conference decides on February 16 to transfer sovereignty over the Memelland to Lithuania, that too is off the table. Thus the Versailles Treaty is broken once again. After Lithuania has taken its Memelland mandated territory from the League of Nations by military force and successfully prevented the demanded plebiscite, the Allied Conference of Ambassadors closes the incident by giving in. But it demands from Lithuania to regulate the transfer of territory contractually in a convention. In addition to the transfer of territory, the Memel Convention stipulated that the Memel countries should have a large degree of autonomy in their new state. The "Memel Convention" is accompanied by the "Memel Statute", the constitution for the transferred territory. On May 8, 1924, the Memel Convention was signed on behalf of the League of Nations by England, France, Italy, Japan and Lithuania. According to Article 1 of the Memel Statute, the Memel area henceforth ²²² The Treaty of Versailles, Article 99, awards the Memel area to the victorious powers on a blanket basis. ²²³ Plieg, page 16 203 "an entity established on democratic principles under the sovereignty of Lithuania, to which autonomy is granted in the legislative, judicial, administrative, and financial fields within more specifically defined limits." The Lithuanian government is now represented in the Memelland by a governor. The country governs itself through a directorate. The laws are enacted by the Memelland Diet. The Memellanders become Lithuanians without being consulted. From then on, Lithuanian citizens from Lithuania began to arrive, and they were called Great Lithuanians, in contrast to the Little Lithuanians and Memel Germans who had been living there until then. The first regional election in the autonomous Memelland on October 29, 1925, with 83% voter turnout, brings 94% of the votes for the parties of the German United Front and 6% for the Lithuanian parties²²⁴, an astonishing result with 48% Lithuanian native speakers. With the clear voter's vote also the annoyance begins. The Lithuanian governor denies the 94% majority the right to appoint the head of government. Against the protest of the Landtag, he appoints a Lithuanian, representing the 6% minority, as head of the directorate. A complaint by the Landtag to the League of Nations and the demand that the Memel Convention be enforced in this matter are not heard. The Memellanders swallow the Lithuanian as head of the Directorate and the League of Nations loses prestige and confidence in Germany once again. In December 1926, the Lithuanian government in Kaunas²²⁵ is hounded out of office in a coup d'état. The coup government imposed a state of siege and war on all of Lithuania, including the Memelland. The state of siege is lifted after a few days. The state of war with martial law and all its negative consequences remained in force until 1938. It is lifted in the Memelland only then on the insistence of the German government. The following years remain a time of unpleasant conflicts for the population of Memelland and the Lithuanians. The Lithuanians accuse the Memellanders of a

lack of will to integrate and of disloyalty. The Memellanders complain about an unending chain of violations of the Memel Convention by the Lithuanians. There are disputes about the use of German as

There are disputes over the use of German as a school and second official language, over the administration of the Memel port, over the state financial resources of the autonomous Memel region, over the pension payments to be made by the state, over Lithuanian court decisions without trial and hearing, over the use of martial law contrary to the Convention, about the repeated removal of the German-Memeland chief of the Directorate, about press censorship, about the arrest of Landtag deputies, about 224 Plieg, page 35 225 Kaunas being Lithuania's capital since Poland occupied Vilnius 204 the constant blocking of Landtag laws by the Lithuanian governor, and so on and so forth. In 1934 and 35, another event strains the Memel-Lithuanian relationship: the Kaunas court-martial. Beginning in February 1934, a few hundred German Memellanders are arrested and suspected of planning an uprising to liberate the Memel region. In January 1935, 126 Memellanders stand before the bars of the Lithuanian court-martial in Kaunas. They are accused of "maintaining Germanism in the Memel region as an anti-state attitude," possession of weapons, cross-country games, and two acts of revenge against Lithuanians²²⁶. The preparation of an armed uprising, however, cannot be proven. The sentences are four times death by firing squad and 89 times penitentiary sentences of various durations. The death sentences are later commuted to penal servitude. The Kaunas trial with the charge of "maintaining Germanness" not only violates the preamble of the Memel Statute, it also finds a strong echo in the German Reich. In 34 German cities there are demonstrations against this verdict. The German-Lithuanian relationship changes from cold to frosty. In the course of 1935 Lithuania tries to conclude a non-aggression pact with the German Reich. The Reich government rejected this, citing the Memel Convention, which had been violated too often. In 1936, economic relations between the two countries initially improved. Nevertheless, a non-aggression pact was again not reached. Instead, in March 1938, the Reich government sent a note to the Lithuanian government demanding that the Memel Convention be observed without exception. The note consists of "11 points of complaint" which the Reich government demands to be settled as soon as possible. The points of complaint are: The state of war since 1926, the restrictions on freedom of association, assembly, and the press, arrests by the Lithuanian wartime commander and the Lithuanian political police, the extensive paralysis of the legislative activities of the Memel Landtag by the frequent veto of the Lithuanian governor contrary to the provisions of the convention, unreasonably extensive expropriations of Memel Germans in the Memel urban area in September 1937, pressure on businesses to replace German workers with Lithuanian workers, and so on²²⁷. What is remarkable about the note of the "11 Points of Complaint" is that the Reich government does not express with a single syllable the desire to cede the Memelland to Germany. Lithuania's foreign policy situation became dicey in 1938. Poland, under threat of war, forces Lithuania to recognize under international law her annexation of the city of Vilnius in 1920. The Lithuanians' two allies, the French and Russians, leave Lithuania without support in this dispute with Poland. A far 226 Plieg, page 135 227 PAAA, R 29675 205 res event points in the same direction. In September 1938, during the Sudeten crisis, France also abandons Czechoslovakia despite a mutual assistance pact. The Lithuanian government realized that in the event of a German-Lithuanian confrontation it would also be left without the help of its allies. Consequences were drawn in Kaunas. Despite the unmistakable wish of the Memelländer to be allowed "home to the Reich", the German government still made no territorial demands at that time. Hitler, however, envisaged a military solution to the problem as early as October 1938. On October 21, he instructs the Wehrmacht command staff that "the Wehrmacht must be prepared at all times to take possession of the Memelland." ²²⁸ Concrete plans and orders, however, do not initially follow from this. As a consequence of its foreign policy situation, the Lithuanian government now begins to sound out the German one. On October 31, the Lithuanian envoy Saulys presents in Berlin the wish to reorganize German-Lithuanian relations, and he asks for a declaration by the Reich government on the inviolability of Lithuanian territory. This is

tantamount to a request that Germany definitively renounce the Memelland. Secretary of State von Weizsäcker in the Foreign Office kept a low profile and demanded full respect for the autonomy of the Memelland before further talks. On November 1, the first of the eleven German "points of complaint" is settled. The state of war in the Memelland was lifted. In the meantime, however, the Memellanders' resentment of their Lithuanian rule had become too great, and the annexation of Austria in March 1938 awakened old desires in them. Beginning in November 1938, pro-German marches and torchlight processions took place in the Memelland region, and there was an open demand for the country's early reincorporation into the German Reich. Nevertheless, the Reich government continued to hold back at first. On November 20, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Urbys let the German envoy in Kaunas know for the first time that his government was prepared to negotiate with Germany on all outstanding issues. This brought movement to the Memel question. On December 1, 1938, the Lithuanian Consul General in Königsberg Dyma visits the staff of the "Deputy of the Führer" in Berlin and delivers the wish from Kaunas to negotiate on Memel. On behalf of the government, he declares that Lithuania is now ready to give full autonomy to the Memel region and to adapt Lithuanian foreign policy to that of the German Reich²²⁹. His German interlocutor, the diplomat Kleist, replies that in his opinion the development in the Memel region would automatically lead to a return of the Memelländer to the German Reich. Dyma replies: 228 ADAP, Page D, Volume IV, Document 81 229 PAAA, R 29675 206 "In his opinion, the happiest solution would be the immediate opening of German-Lithuanian negotiations. These negotiations would thus proceed, on the German side, from the automatic return of the Memel region to Germany. On the Lithuanian side, the starting point would be the offer of full autonomy. The result could be a compromise 230 con-dominium of Germany and Lithuania over Memel." 230 231 Lithuanian diplomacy thus shows willingness to make concessions. The German diplomacy does not yet reveal its cards. For the time being, it is quietly making preparations. Reich Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop considers inviting his Lithuanian colleague and has two treaties drawn up. Draft one is a German-Lithuanian treaty providing for the return of the Memelland to Germany and, in return, a Lithuanian free port and economic privileges in Memel. Draft two calls only for full autonomy for the Memelland. Otherwise, the Foreign Minister informs his House that a reconquest of the Memel area by force is not Hitler's intention. In the files of the Foreign Office from these days there is repeatedly the remark of the Secretary of State von Weizsäcker "We leave the Lithuanians uncertain about our intentions regarding Memel²³¹." At the time, Germany and foreign countries were waiting with anticipation for the next Memel state elections. On December 11, 1938, 96% of eligible Memelanders go to the polls under the eyes of American, Polish, French, Italian and English election observers and journalists. Despite the 48% of Lithuanian native speakers, the German list gets over 87% of the votes cast. The result looks like a vote of the population for annexation to the German Reich. England and France react alarmed to this result. The very day after the election, the governments of both powers inform the Foreign Office in Berlin "that they, as signatory powers of the Memel Convention, trust the German Government to exert its influence on the Memelländer in the sense of 232 maintaining the status quo". 232 Thus, the British and French demanded that the Memelland remain with Lithuania, and this despite the apparently contrary will of the population concerned. At the time of the Memel Land election, Hitler had not yet committed his first fall from grace, the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Thus, the reactions from Paris and London cannot yet be explained as a reflex to Hitler's later aggressions. Thus, even after their debacle at the Munich Conference and the annexation of the Sudeten territories to 230 PAAA, R 29675 231 PAAA, R 29675 232 PAAA, R 29675 207 the German Reich, England and France are still not prepared to rectify their Versailles mistakes themselves. They leave it to the Germans. The reactions from Berlin and Kaunas to the state elections are something like the calm before the storm. On February 2, 1939, the "Deputy of the Fuehrer," Rudolf Hess, issues a

top-secret directive to the German offices in the Memel region and in the German Reich "that all efforts by German party offices to reach the Memel region must cease, that before hand any conflict with the Lithuanian government must be avoided, and that the Memel German leadership will be held responsible for the 233 implementation of this directive." 233 The German government thus exercises restraint. The Lithuanian government initially lets developments in the Memelland run their course, before it

the brakes again in February. Bilingualism now becomes compulsory for the Lithuanian authorities in the Memelland. From now on, the language of instruction is determined by the parents' wishes. The Lithuanian state security police are forced to leave the area, even though they continue to monitor the German inhabitants of Memelland disguised as railroad and border police. In the schools, the Lithuanian state emblems were removed and with them the pictures of President Smetona. But in spite of all these concessions, the mood of the population is pushing ever harder for annexation to the German motherland. In the Lithuanian-oriented part of the population of the Memelands there were soon counter-reactions. Brawls between young people of both nationalities and broken windows show that temperatures are rising on both sides. On March 12, 600 Lithuanians, 450 of them with rifles, disrupt a German ceremony at a memorial for the fallen. The ceremony and the disturbance are considered a serious provocation by the other side. On March 15, 1939, the Wehrmacht marches into "Bohemia and Moravia". The German-Memellanders take this as a good omen for themselves and next hope for an invasion of German troops into the Memelland. Meanwhile, the new parliament elected in December has still not been convened by the Lithuanian governor for its first session. On this March 15, the representative of the German party list, Dr. Neumann, makes a public speech in front of the Landtag building. He laments the violation of the right of self-determination of the Memelländer. He denounces the economic decline of the area under Lithuanian rule, and he demands that the governor convene the Landtag for its first session by March 25. Two days later, Dr. Neumann gives an interview to representatives of the Reuter Agency and the DAILY TELEGRAPH, in which he states publicly for the first time that the German population of the Memelland awaits annexation to the German Reich and hopes that the Lithuanian government will release the territory. He adds that the Memellanders would feel no 233 PAAA, R 29675, folio 120 785 208 enmity against the Lithuanian population, not even against the Lithuanian soldiers²³⁴ 235. Thus the cat is out of the bag. The Neumann statements are followed by Lithuanian inquiries in Paris and London. The French government states that it had given no guarantee to Lithuania. The British reply is evasively sibylline. The Lithuanians, many of whom had previously disregarded the Memel Convention, now find no protection under its umbrella either. On March 20, after Lithuania fails to find support in Paris and London, Foreign Minister Urbsys travels to Berlin to see Ribbentrop. The German minister, who until then had always kept a low profile with regard to Memel, now takes advantage of his Lithuanian colleague's hopeless situation. He knows that Lithuania once took the Memelland without right and by force, that it did not observe the Memel Convention for the longest time, that the Memelländer decided by an overwhelming majority in favor of the German Reich, and that Lithuania now finds no support among the victorious powers. Von Ribbentrop begins the conversation with Urbsys by stating that the Memelländer want to return to Germany. Then he presents Urbsys with a choice. "There are two possibilities," von Ribbentrop says, "a friendly settlement followed by friendly relations between the two countries. In this we would be economically generous and solve the free port question in Lithuania's favor. Otherwise, it is impossible to see where the development will end. If there are uprisings and shootings in the Memel region, Germany will not stand by quietly. The Fuehrer will act in a flash and the situation will then be decided by the military." Von Ribbentrop ends the conversation with an offer of a treaty to settle both, the return of Memel and the free port for Lithuania. Urbsys asks for a few days

to think it over, but von Ribbentrop follows up and advises to "send a plenipotentiary as soon as possible to conclude the treaty." The Lithuanian minister returns to Kaunas the same day. The following day, the Lithuanian cabinet discusses the German offer, which obviously leaves no other choice, from 2 p.m. on. At 7 p.m. the decision is made to return the Memelland. Then President Smetona is informed of the decision. At 0:20 a.m. the press office informs the media. The following day, the 22nd, both countries sign the treaty offered by Germany, which brings the Memelland back to the Reich and guarantees Lithuania a free port in Memel and certain rights. Almost simultaneously, notes are sent by the Lithuanian government to those in London, Rome, Paris, and Tokyo, which, according to Article 15 of the Memel Convention, as signatory powers of that convention, must "consent to the transfer of sovereign rights over the Memel area." The Powers concerned declare that they will not take any action against the transfer of the Memelland back to Germany. Thus, on March 22, 1939, the Memel region becomes German again under international law. As early as the night of the 23rd, the Lithuanian military begins to withdraw from Memel in accordance with the treaty. In the early morning hours, three German army battalions stationed nearby marched in from Tilsit, and a dozen navy ships docked in the Memel harbor. The whole handover is not a warlike undertaking. The annexation of the Memelland corresponds to the will of the great majority of the population concerned, and it follows a treaty valid under international law. It certainly cannot be said that the Lithuanians' renunciation is an act of free will. It is probably more an act of insight, with which one gives back what one can no longer hold. On May 15, 1939, the British government acknowledges the return of the Memelland in a note in which it writes: "Her Majesty's Embassy.... has the honor to inform the (German) Foreign Office, on behalf of Her Majesty's Foreign Office, that Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom has decided to recognize de jure the German unification with Memel²³⁶ ²³⁷. This de jure recognition is remarkable in that it was forgotten in England and by the other World War I victorious powers soon thereafter. At the 1945 Potsdam Victory Conference, British Prime Minister Churchill and U.S. President Truman jointly define what they read "Germany" to be. For them it is Germany in the borders of 1937 without Memel. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg also declared the return of Memel to be one of six violations of the Treaty of Versailles in its 1946 verdict.²³⁷ ²³⁸ This verdict ignores the fact that the governments of England and France did not object to the return of Memel in 1939 when questioned by Lithuania and thus abrogated Article 99 of the Treaty of Versailles themselves. It overlooks the "de jure recognition" of the British government, by which the British said in 1939 that their recognition was "by operation of law" and not, for example, by virtue of the facts created or as a result of force. The Versailles powers created the dispute between the Lithuanians and the Germans over Memel in 1920. If this was not a bad intention, it was at least a nonsense act. To separate a piece of land and its population from the motherland, without knowing to whom it would ultimately be awarded, is a destructive act without sense or wisdom. The First World War victors, who always pretended to have stood up for democracy, freedom and the right of self ²³⁶ Plieg, page 224 ²³⁷ Parenthesis is author's note ²³⁸ IMT, Vol. XXII, page 522 ²¹⁰ determination of peoples, never once cared about the right and freedom of the affected population in the Memelland. The Lithuanians' share of guilt in the dispute is no less. They conquered the territory in 1923 in an act of war. In the 15 years of their rule, they have so often undermined and broken the legal basis for the coexistence of the Memel Germans and the Lesser Lithuanians that the relationship between the two groups, which has always been peaceful, has quickly been poisoned. Lithuania has also not been so vital and attractive that it could have had the chance to become a new homeland for the forced naturalized Germans as a multi-ethnic state. The third sinner is the League of Nations, which has failed as a peacekeeper over the Memelland from the beginning. The return of the Memelland within only one week from the first public demand of Dr. Neumann to the conclusion of the treaty and the quick recognition by the victorious powers is

another success for Adolf Hitler; the last in a long chain of successes. Without the victors of 1918 there would have been no need for the return of German troops to the Rhineland garrisons, there would have been no need for the Saarland, the Sudeten territories and the Memelland to be rejoined, and there would have been no need for Austria to be forced into statehood against the will of its people and parliament. The victors at Versailles and Saint-Germain could have settled all this without a Hitler if they had wanted peace with the Germans in the future. After the chain of successes, it is not surprising that Hitler, first, is now trying to annex the German city of Danzig to Germany, and, second, that in doing so, he no longer properly appreciates the First World War victors. Apart from all the revisions that Hitler can take credit for from the Saar to the Memel, only two questions now remain open : that of the return of Danzig and that of the

return of the former German colonies by the victorious powers. The open colonial question The Abyssinia conquest by the Italians does not constitute the only shock emanating from the dispute over colonies after the First World War. The problem of rapidly growing populations with inadequate raw materials and food supplies at the time was not only of concern to the Italians. Poles, Japanese, Germans and other peoples were also affected.

Thus, the urge for new "living space" remained a part of foreign policy for many states until World War II. The U.S. and Russia solved their "Lebensraum problems" by expanding across a continent at a time, driving out, decimating and subjugating peoples inferior to them in terms of civilization. Their colonial space has long since become an integral part of the national territory even before 1918, so that it is no longer considered a colony under international law and colloquially. Despite this saturation of living space, the United States continued to maintain colonies outside its own borders after World War I, the Philippines, Guam, Eastern Samoa, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii. England and France established their colonial empires overseas. Since there is no territorial connection to the mother country here, and since the subjugated peoples cannot be decimated and displaced like the Indians, these colonies remain colonies under international law. Only in Canada, New Zealand and Australia it is possible to push the native population, as in the USA, into inhospitable parts of the country and to establish there first colonies and then vassal states. The colonies and dominions provide troops to Britain and France in World War I. At the end of this war, Wilson proposes peace to Germany with his 14 points. In the 5th point of the 14 he promises a "free, unprejudiced and absolutely impartial settlement of all colonial claims," but nothing is to come of it. Map 15: German Colonies in Africa 1914 212 Despite the saturation already achieved, England and France take the mass of the hitherto German colonies in 1920. With German Southwest Africa (Namibia), German East Africa (Tanzania), Togo, northeastern New Guinea and the Pacific island groups of Nauru and Western Samoa, 1,200,000 square kilometers of German colonial territory were annexed to the British Empire. France receives about 500,000 square kilometers with Cameroon. Italy receives 80,000 square kilometers in the course of an exchange of territory in Africa. Belgium gets Rwanda together with Burundi and Japan takes over the Marianas and the Marshall Islands in the Pacific from Germany. However, this redistribution does not solve the "habitat problem" of the Italians and Japanese. Map 16: The German Colonies in the Pacific 1914 Italy's dispute over Abyssinia has already been described. In 1914, Japan, like Italy in 1915, was persuaded by England to declare war against Germany with the promise that it would be awarded the German colonies in the Pacific north of the equator in the event of a German defeat. At Versailles, the U.S. prevents Japan from getting its full spoils. German rights in Shantung in China are withheld from Tokyo, and Japan must surrender its conquests south of the equator to England and Australia. Notwithstanding its small war 213 gains, in 1920 Japan, like other nations, continues to face the problems of a rapidly growing population and shortages of food, coal, oil, and ores. In addition, after World War I, there are two further complications. The U.S. changes its immigration laws and no longer

allows citizens of Japan into the country, and with tariffs and import laws it keeps Japanese products out of its own market. Thus, the population pressure on Japan's islands is increasing, while the foreign exchange with which the country could buy abroad is shrinking. Both of these factors further fuel the drive for new colonies. Japan had begun building a colonial empire while the hunt for colonies was still open. In 1895 it took Formosa (Taiwan), then Korea in 1910, and in 1915 it tried to establish itself in China. But after the "final sale of 1920, Japan continues its quest for a larger colonial empire. From 1931 to 1934, it conquers Manchuria. Thus Japan, together with Italy, is pilloried as a colonial power that came too late by those states that, from 1920 on, only defend their colonial possessions. Poland in the same difficulties first expands its living space at the expense of Russia when it conquers parts of Belarus and Ukraine in 1920 and then annexes them as "Eastern Poland". But this obviously does not solve the problem in view of the further increasing population, as Foreign Minister Beck reveals to the foreign press in 1939. The minister mentioned at a press conference on January 26, 1939, that Poland was interested in colonies "because it was seeking land for emigration and needed raw materials for its industry." For this reason, according to Minister Beck, cooperation was being sought with countries that owned colonies²³⁹. Beck's statements show that the Poles have the same worries as many other peoples. Hitler with his Lebensraum thoughts is not an isolated case in his time, and this problem is not as exceptional in the 20s and 30s as it seems to us today. It is for the most part the same nations that talk about the right of self-determination of peoples, and that keep colonies. The contradiction, which already confronts the victorious powers in Versailles, finds its cure in a new interpretation of colonial rule. In Article 22 of Part I of the League of Nations Act, colonial rule is now called "guardianship by advanced nations over peoples not yet capable of governing themselves under the particularly difficult conditions of the modern world." According to this new reading, the rule of the Americans, British, and French is a boon to those unable to find their way in this world, even though Indians, Syrians, Egyptians, and many others asked their colonial masters several times after World War I to finally leave.

²³⁹ Archives of the Present, page 3905 214 The dictator Hitler is, as far as his thinking about colonies and living space is concerned, a child of the times. His ideas and statements on questions of food and raw materials, on living space and colonies run like a thread through his life, but he changes his point of view more often. In the book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote in 1924 that Germany should renounce the imperial colonies and look for living space in the East instead.²⁴⁰ This was certainly the result of his experience in World War I. The German Empire, as a second-rate naval power, had no chance of importing food, coal, oil, and ores from the colonies during the war. This was prevented by the British and the Americans in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean and by the Japanese in the Pacific. Germany could certainly have made better use of a colony in Eastern Europe during the war. From 1928 to 1933, Hitler then remained silent on Lebensraum and colonies, presumably so as not to frighten anyone in the struggle for his chancellorship. Immediately after coming to power in February 1933, Hitler took up this subject again. In his inaugural speech to senior Reich military officers, he developed thoughts on the problem of growing population and permanently insufficient food supply. He poses the question of which is better, an overseas colony or new settlement land in Eastern Europe. This speech will be discussed later in this book. Since this inaugural speech, Hitler has repeatedly mentioned the "new living space" in closed circles and secret speeches, without saying before the war that he was thinking of the Ukraine. Thus, the topic remains theoretically academic for the party and the Wehrmacht until the war. Even when events in the summer of 1939 seem to be moving inexorably toward war, Hitler does not associate the "Lebensraum in the East" with Poland. Hitler's statements in public speeches and to foreign countries are different. Here he speaks mainly of Germany's former colonies, which he had still written off in "*Mein Kampf*". Often, when Germany's food and raw material situation is addressed in the Reichstag, Hitler refers to two goals: he wants to make Germany economically self-sufficient, that is, as

independent as possible from foreign trade, and he calls for an overseas colony. At the Reich Party Congress on September 9, 1936, the dictator proclaims the goal of making the German Reich self-sufficient in raw materials, adding, "Independently of this, however, Germany cannot refrain from resolving its 241 colonial demands." 241 At the "Party Congress of Labor" a year later, on September 7, 1937, he says in his speech, "It is therefore that the demand for colonial possessions belonging to the Reich is one founded in our economic need. And the attitude of the other powers to this demand is one that is simply not tolerable. 240 Hitler, pp. 736 ff 241 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 637 215 Germany once gave her colonies to these powers. Germany once neither 242 robbed nor stole her colonies from these powers." 242 There is a piece of reproach to the British in the last sentence. While Germany had acquired its colonies by treaty or purchase, England's colonies had mostly been conquered. In the fall of 1936 and February 1937, German Economics Minister and Reichsbank President Hjalmar Schacht, with Hitler's authority, submitted a proposal first to the French, then to the British, to resolve all outstanding disputes between France, Britain, and Germany in a comprehensive arrangement. This was to include a settlement on the colonial question. Schacht

brings Cameroon and Togo into the discussion, which should come under German economic control, but not under German sovereignty²⁴³. In this way, the two colonies would be open to all states for trade, and the impression would not arise that England and France had to return conquered territories to the German Empire. Schacht's advance is moderate, but it is successively rejected first by England, then by France. In the following years, Hitler keeps this point of "Versailles injustice" on the agenda by recalling it twice. He discusses the topic with the ambassadors of England, France, Poland²⁴⁴ and with the representative of the League of Nations for Danzig²⁴⁵, however, without demanding all former German colonies

and without urging haste. Thus, in front of the French Foreign Minister Bonnet and the League of Nations representative Professor Burckhardt, he speaks of needing "space in the East for grain and a colony for timber." ²⁴⁶ Compared to the colonial territories of other nations, which are numerically significantly smaller than Germany's, a rather modest request, but measured against the self-image of the British and French, pure explosive. On November 19, 1937, Lord Halifax, later Foreign Secretary, visits Hitler at Obersalzberg as emissary of the British government. According to the British media, the purpose of the trip was the prime minister's intention to sort out relations with Germany and to discuss the outstanding issues, including the colonial question²⁴⁷. Lord Halifax opens the conversation after a few words of welcome with critical remarks about the treatment of churches, Jews and trade unions in the German Reich. However, he adds the recognition that Hitler had saved Western Europe from Bolshevism by destroying communism in his own country. The focus of the exchange of views that now follows between Halifax and Hitler ²⁴² Domarus, Volume 1, page 716 ²⁴³ Bevendamm, Roosevelt's Road to War, pages 240 ff ²⁴⁴ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 6, page 283 ²⁴⁵ Burckhardt, page 341 ²⁴⁶ Bonnet, page 247 ²⁴⁷ The course of the following conversation: ADAP, Series D, Volume 1, pages 46-56 and PAAA, R 29575 Fiche 215 216 stands the colonial question. Lord Halifax is the first to concede that "the errors of the Versailles Treaty would have to be put right," but only on the basis of "reasonable arrangements." England did not generally oppose a return of colonies to Germany, but London could not negotiate this with Berlin alone. A new arrangement for the distribution of the colonies was only conceivable within the framework of an overall European settlement. Hitler counters that although the British government is willing to discuss colonies, its party, the Conservatives, categorically rejects a retransfer. He adds that it is not Germany's business to make demands here, but the business of the victors to make proposals in this regard. After all, Germany would have a claim to its former possessions. Either the colonial question would eventually be "settled in the free play of forces" or there would be a "reasonable solution" before then. Hitler ended his remarks with the assurance that he would also accept

acceptable compensation proposals if England or France believed for strategic reasons that they could not return certain colonies. Halifax's subsequent account of this conversation with Hitler includes an idea, but no one follows it up with action: "Instead of trying to buy off Hitler's colonial demands with a 'free hand' in Europe, the possibly reasonable course should be to offer him a colonial settlement at the price of showing himself to be a good European." 248 Despite good intentions, there is no progress on the question of the reassignment of former German colonies, even when Halifax himself became foreign minister in 1938. In March 1938, the British ambassador in Berlin merely brings Henderson once into the conversation that Germany could perhaps be given an area in Africa, corresponding to the Congo Basin, for example²⁴⁹. The mention of the Congo may be interpreted as an offer at Belgium's expense. The proposal was not followed by any deeds. One year after the Halifax visit, on September 19, 1938, Prime Minister Chamberlain is a guest of Hitler to settle the question of the return of the Sudeten Germans "home to the Reich". There, too, Hitler does not forget to mention the colonies. "This question," Hitler said, "is not, however, a warlike demand. It must, however, be fulfilled some day, and Germany will never deviate from it." 250 After this Chamberlain visit and the annexation of the Sudetenland, things grew colder again between London and Berlin. Hitler's threat of war was too strong. Then, six months later, when the rest of Czechoslovakia is made a German protectorate, the anger in England is great. Hitler had made his presence felt here in ei 248 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Second Series, Volume XIX, Document 336 249 Weizsäcker Papers, page 497, footnote 12 250 ODSUN Documents, page 758 217 of a kind not accepted in London. Above all, one does not want England to lose one day the former German colonies acquired in 1920 in the same way under German pressure. But before the colonies, Danzig is obviously on the agenda. And so, from the occupation of Czechoslovakia on, the English government is trying to create a hurdle for the Germans at which they must stop or start a war themselves. From now on, England is determined to use the Danzig dispute to put a stop to Germany's further revisions before England's own war gains are at stake. Thus consequently follows the British guarantee to Poland against Germany and the further expansion of the army, air forces and navy. Hitler, who has always sought a partnership with Britain, and who will try to reach an agreement with London until the last day before the outbreak of war, has here touched one of Britain's two sore points. The second point, as will be shown later, is the rearmament of the navy. Hitler has referred too frequently and too clearly to Germany's claim to the colonies for English sensibilities. Too frequently and too clearly, even though he always emphasized that this question could only be solved amicably and without time pressure at some point. Despite the situation so aggravated by Hitler's occupation of the Czech Republic, the Anglo-German talks continued, if only at the level of officials. On July 18, 1939, the British Treasury and the "Office of the Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan" held exploratory talks on the possibilities of political, economic and military cooperation between the two countries. An English representative talks about a "joint development of Africa by the European colonial powers", without, however, mentioning Germany's direct participation²⁵¹. He includes English, Portuguese, Spanish, Belgian, French and former German colonies in such a construction. Thus, every proposal of England from 1937 to 39 remains non-binding, and each time London's intention to compensate Germany also at the expense of other states shimmers through. The provision for an unhindered and crisis-proof supply of raw materials for Germany's industry and of food for Germany's steadily growing population is a constant theme of Hitler's foreign and economic policy. The dictator sees three possible solutions to the problem, all of which lead to conflicts with the victors from World War I. If Germany pursued even more foreign trade, it would run up against competition from England, the United States and France. Also, the customs sovereignty of the three aforementioned states in the colonies, the naval dominance of America and England on the seas, and the dominance of the U.S. in South America can close all trade doors for the Germans in times of crisis in North and South

America, in 251 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 716 218 218 Asia, Africa, and in Australia. If Germany so the second solution approach of England, Belgium and France demands its former colonies, there is most likely war. In the next but one chapter of the book, Hitler's thoughts in this direction are presented on the basis of his many speeches. A German-dominated economic area in Southeastern and Eastern Europe remains as a third approach. 219 220 PART 3 THE REARMAMENT BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939 Rearmament between 1918 and 1939 The Versailles Disarmament Law International Rearmament after World War I Fleet Armament Air Armament Armament of the Land Forces The Geneva Disarmament Negotiations until 1933 The Secret Defense Preparations of the Reichswehr until 1933 The Secret Defense Preparations in the Reichsheer The Secret Defense Preparations of the Reichsmarine The secret preparations for the establishment of an air force Secret preparations in the general defense Hitler and the Geneva disarmament negotiations until 1934 The arms race from 1933 The naval armament 1933 to 1939 The air armament 1933 to 1939 The army armament 1933 to 1939 Guilt and complicity 221 222 THE REARMAMENT BETWEEN 1918 AND 1939 Parallel to the events of the epoch of the 1920s and 1930s just described, a process is taking place, with which Germany, from today's point of view and to all appearances, is heading straight for a new war, the rearmament of the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht. In the context of this book, it is interesting to consider whether the German people in general and the Wehrmacht in particular before World War II also knowingly contributed to the

Fire of 1939. In view of the rearmament, the question arises whether the population and the Wehrmacht could have known or should have known before 1939 through this event that Hitler would risk a new war or that he even wanted to wage it. In this case, both would be accomplices and complicit. In case, however, the rearmament was based on other reasons and interpretations at the time, the population and the Wehrmacht cannot be accused of either complicity or complicity. The increase in the size of the army, the buildup of the air force, and the tripling of the tonnage of ships in the fleet should, after all, have given the people of the German Reich a warning. The Versailles Disarmament Treaty The First World War ended with the Versailles Peace Treaty, which was intended to lay the foundation for a lasting peace in Europe. Among other things, the treaty contains far-reaching obligations for all signatory states to disarm their armies after the war. This obligation therefore does not apply to defeated Germany alone. In Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, Article 8, all signatory states declare "that the maintenance of peace makes it necessary to reduce national armaments to the minimum compatible with national security." Only Part V of the treaty stipulates that Germany must reduce its armed forces to 100,000 men in the army and 15,000 men in the navy "in order to permit the initiation of a general limitation of armaments by all nations." In addition to limiting the size of land forces and navies, the Treaty of Versailles also stipulates that the German Empire is prohibited from possessing military aircraft, heavy artillery, battle tanks, and some other war equipment. The accompanying note of June 16, 1919, with which French Minister President Clemenceau sends the treaty text to the German Reich government "in the name of the Allies," repeats the self-commitment of the victorious states to also reduce the size of their own armies after German disarmament is complete. This note states: "German disarmament represents at the same time the first step toward the general reduction and limitation of armaments. After Germany will have shown the way, the Allied and Associated Powers will in full security follow the same path." 1 The victors thus pledge their own disarmament for the time when German disarmament has been accomplished. Early in 1927, the moment would have arrived. On January 31, 1927, the Inter-Allied Military Commission of the victorious powers officially states that the German Reich has completed its disarmament in accordance with the treaty. According to the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Versailles, this should have been the starting shot for a comprehensive and global wave of disarmament after the First World War.

International Rearmament after World War I Fleet Armament The reality outside the German Empire after World War I, however, was quite different. Despite the preamble to Part V of the Treaty of Versailles, in which the victorious states promised disarmament, an arms race began on a global scale. The very word arms race reflects the reasons. The participating states are concerned with their further ambitions and competitive relations after they have eliminated the three major competitors, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Germany. The rearmament of the states around Germany and worldwide forms the background against which the Germans see their "race to catch up" from 1934. The first round is played by the four remaining major competitors, England, the USA, Japan and, in a supporting role, the Soviet Union. Great Britain, out of its self-image and to secure its colonial empire, claims to be the world's first naval power. The U.S. perceived Britain's naval strength in the Atlantic and its bases off the coasts of Central America as a risk in the East and Japan's expansionist policy in Asia as a risk in the West². Japan, still an ally of the two great powers in the First World War, kept its distance after the war when the USA disputed the German colonies in the Pacific, which England had promised the Japanese as a reward for entering the war against Germany before the war.³ 1 v. Oertzen, p. 13 2 Schwarz, p. 35 ff 3 Brit.-Japan. Agreement of Feb. 16, 1917. See Wilson Documents, Vol. I, page 58 224 Japan, Britain, the U.S., and the Soviet Union also pursue economic and hegemonic interests in the Pacific, especially vis-à-vis China. The U.S. demands the "open door principle" for Asia, thereby free access to China's large domestic market and, in turn, the reduction of China's external tariffs. Japan counters this demand with the demand that the Americans then open their market to goods and products from all over Asia. At the time, Great Britain was already engaged in trade and military activities in China. It has stationed troops and ships in China and intervenes in internal Chinese disputes with landing forces in 1922, 23, 26 and 27. Japan claimed its own interests in Shantung in 1928. Russian troops invade Manchuria in 1929, and Japan occupies all of Manchuria in 1931. Thus, immediately after World War I, the Versailles approach of reducing troops is already being undermined by the victorious powers, the United States, Great Britain and Japan. During their race for first place in the Far East, the three states continue naval armament, which has been in full swing since the war.⁴ U.S. President Wilson is the first to reignite the naval arms buildup after the world war. He is reacting angrily to the British and French rejection of a large part of his 14 peace points at Versailles. A particular point of contention is his second peace point, in which he had demanded "absolute freedom of navigation on the seas" in peace and in war, a point that would have forbidden Britain its naval blockades for all time. The British insisted that this point not be negotiated at Versailles, and Wilson reacted. The has the U.S. Congress pass a new super-fleet building program in 1919 that represents a doubling of all American warship construction during the just-ended World War. Britain and Japan follow suit in 1920 with their own new shipbuilding programs⁵. Both now see their naval power positions threatened by the United States. Thus, it is the three major naval powers that first oppose the disarmament agreed upon at Versailles. With the 1920 presidential election in the U.S., a turning point seemingly occurs. President Harding, who succeeds Wilson, who has been voted out of office, pursues a different policy with regard to the fleet. On the one hand, Harding feels committed to the idea of disarmament; on the other hand, he sees that a problem of a strategic nature is emerging for the USA. The trend in naval armament in all countries is toward ever larger new ships. Ships that are too large, especially wide, can no longer pass through the Panama Canal, but the U.S. Navy must be able to sail its ships through the canal from the Pacific to the Atlantic if it is to be available in both oceans. For this reason, the U.S. can no longer follow the shipbuilding of other nations once their newbuildings exceed the "Pana 4 Potter/Nimitz, page 448 5 Potter/Nimitz, page 449 225 ma measure." Thus, President Harding puts a rein on the threatening development and invites the maritime great powers to a conference in Washington in 1921. At the conference, the U.S. government proposes to the invited countries to limit the total tonnage of all fleets, to allocate quotas for liners and

capital ships to the nations, to scrap all new ships not completed to date, and to lay no new capital ships on keel for ten years. In response to this proposal, the U.S., England, Japan, France, and Italy agree in 1922 to a ten-year moratorium on new construction of large ships and accept that they may maintain aircraft carriers and capital ships only at a ratio of 100 for the U.S. and England to 60 for Japan to 35 for France and Italy⁶. America is rid of its concern about the Panama Passage for a few years, and Japan's fleet construction is stymied for the time being. Instead of reducing shipbuilding now in the spirit of this Washington Agreement, the Versailles Treaty, and the Geneva disarmament negotiations that began in 1926, the aforementioned countries shift to modernizing their "light" naval forces, which are not subject to the ten-year construction ban. For example, France is replacing 10 of its 14 Protected Kreuzer⁷s with modern ships and 26 of its 59 destroyers during the ten construction ban years. The United States replaces 18 of 21 Protected Cruisers with new builds, Japan replaces 22 out of a total inventory of 32, and Italy replaces 43 of 56 destroyers with new and modern ships⁸. The defeated German Empire, on the other hand, builds only 5 light cruisers in the same period to replace old ships, and does not lay down its first armored ship until 1930. In 1930, during the global economic crisis, the British government attempts to curb the armament of the "light" naval forces. It invites the naval conference to London. France and Italy refuse to submit once again to quotas in fleet construction. Germany, which asks for an invitation on its own initiative, is not admitted to the conference. Thus, the London Fleet Agreement of 1930 only applies to England, Japan and the USA, and only for a short time. Great Britain, for example, builds 3 new cruisers, 9 destroyers and 3 submarines⁹ every year from 1931. The naval powers begin to catch up on their ten-year building freeze even before

Adolf Hitler can influence the Reichsmarine's armament planning from 1933. At this time, Great Britain, Japan and the USA are fighting for their supremacy in the Pacific and France and Italy for that in the Mediterranean. The arms race is in full swing before Germany⁶ Weyers 1922, pages 355 ff⁷ Cruiser with armored deck⁸ Weyers 1932, pages 54 ff⁹ Dreessen, page 105 226 makes its appearance in this respect from 1934. The opinion often held today that the worldwide rearmament in the 1930s was unleashed by Hitler's Germany is therefore completely erroneous. The traditional naval powers, the USA, Japan and Great Britain at least, had long since upgraded their "main weapon", the fleets, before Hitler came on the scene in 1933. Here a thought suggests itself to the way of consideration. In historiography, the later German rearmament is seen as an indication of early German war intentions. Among other things, the army strengths of Germany, England and America are used as proof. This makes the German rearmament seem particularly glaring and England's and America's love of peace well visible as a contrast. But such a comparison is skewed, false and misleading. It places the relatively weak armies of naval powers next to the great army of the land power, Germany. An equally skewed comparison, which would measure the three states by their navies alone, would have to impute war intentions to England and the USA with the same false logic. In 1931, the naval ratio between England, the U.S. and Germany was 10 to 9 to 1. Even after the rearmament

of the German Reich at the start of the war in September 1939, the ratio is still 10 for England to 9.2 for the U.S. to 1.7 for Germany. Given this superiority of the Royal and U.S. navies, it is doubtful that the admiralty of the Reichsmarine and its corps of naval officers suspected before 1937 that Hitler might someday wish to use this modest fleet in a war of aggression. Air Armament After World War I, air armament in Europe is also not initially pushed by the German side. Here, it is primarily France and Italy that provide the impetus. In the early 1920s, the Italian general Douhet developed a new theory of air warfare¹⁰. New is his idea to decide wars in the future with the air forces. According to Douhet, the bombing of residential areas and industrial plants in enemy territory is likely to break the will to war of the "affected" population and paralyze further production of weapons. With such a doctrine, the air forces of any state become a potential threat to any other country within their reach. Thus, it is

understandable that beginning in 1922, Great Britain felt threatened by France and sought to catch up with the French advantage in air power. 10 Douhet writes the book "Il dominio del l'aria" (The Air Dominion) 227 After World War I, France retains its Armee de l'Air with 300 bombers, 300 fighters and other military aircraft in active service. England, on the other hand, has only 40 bombers and fighters combined in 1922. When the TIMES in London revealed this fact in March 1922, it produced a shock throughout England. The English population felt threatened by the radius of the French bomber fleet, which was strong at that time. This did not remain without consequences. In 1923, the House of Commons in London decided to establish 52 new air force squadrons as quickly as possible¹¹. In England, Douhet's idea of using bombers to fight against the civilian population was also adopted. On November 28, 1932, the Conservative leader Baldwin spoke in a House of Commons debate, albeit with an expression of regret, about his ideas for the bombing war of the future: "The only possible defense here is attack. That means killing more women and children faster than the enemy if 12 you want to save yourself." 12 Thus, England and France are arming to compete, instead of the French reducing their army de l'air, as agreed in the Treaty of Versailles. In 1932 France has about 1500 military aircraft for combat use, England 600¹³ and Germany none. The English debate in November 1932 cannot yet refer to a threat from the German Reich. It shows that the British's later relentlessly harsh bombing campaign against civilians has an early origin in Germany. France and Italy were also arming against each other. Both compete for influence and territory in Savoy, Corsica, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. Italy reaches 1,500 military aircraft in 1932. Russia also builds up a respectable air force. From 1925, Tupolev produces the world's first all-metal bomber, and from 1930, the first four-engine heavy bomber. This is followed by the establishment of a heavy bomber corps in March 1932. In 1930, about 860 military aircraft of all types are manufactured annually in the Soviet Union. By 1935, the number had risen to 3,500¹⁴ annually. All of this armament, from whatever cause, radiated to the German Reich. On July 28, 1932, still under the prohibition of the Versailles Treaty, the Reichswehr leadership orders the acquisition of 200 military aircraft by 1937 and the establishment of 22 training squadrons¹⁵. 11 Terraine, page 10 12 Colvin, page 121 13 Poturzyn, page 22 14 Topitsch, pages 159 and 167 15 MGFA, DR u 2.WK, vol. 1, page 402 228 Armament of Land Forces The German Reich, with land borders with ten neighboring countries, depends primarily on its army forces for defense. The relative strength of its own ground forces in relation to those of all neighboring states is of special importance. With the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty, Germany can first count on the neighboring countries to "reduce national armaments to the minimum level compatible with national security." At least, that is what eight of ten neighboring countries agreed to do with Article 8, Part I of the Treaty of Versailles. This would make the German army reduction to 100,000 men and 10 divisions bearable. But already the incursions of Poles, French, Belgians and Lithuanians into German territory until 1924 show that a large state like Germany cannot be protected with only 10 army divisions. Even after the conclusion of the German arms and troop reductions in 1927, the victorious states do not think of fulfilling their obligations under the Treaty of Versailles. Just as the British and Japanese retain their fleets and the French their Armee de l'Air, almost all neighboring states do not think of reducing their land forces to the promised "minimum." States are disarming to the extent they deem compatible with their national security. There is no longer any talk of "minimum size." France, with its army downsized to 700,000 soldiers, continues to feel threatened by Germany with 100,000 troops in its army. It therefore supplements its own security expenditures with loans for arms purchases and military advisors to a ring of countries that border Germany all around. The result is that these countries, Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, maintain oversized armies which are in no way commensurate with their size, the head count of their people, and the capacity of their national budgets. With 100,000 German army soldiers, France and the nations allied with it against Germany maintain in 1923¹⁶ France 724,000

men Belgium 113,000 men Poland 275,000 men Czechoslovakia 140,000 men and Lithuania 32,000 men¹⁷ This risky outnumbering of 12 to 1 for the German Reich does not change in the course of the League of Nations disarmament conference in Geneva until 1934. ¹⁶ Nitti, pages 159 and 167 According to Nitti, these are the figures shown to the League of Nations. ¹⁷ Statkus, table without page references. ²²⁹ When Hitler came to power in 1933, the 100,000 men in the German army were still opposed¹⁸ by 655,000 Frenchmen 66,000 Belgians 298,000 Poles 140,000 Czechs and 32,000 Lithuanians In addition, there were 885,000 Soviet soldiers as a further risk to Germany, albeit only in the second row.¹⁹ An aggravating factor from the German point of view was that, as a result of the Versailles ban, Germany had not maintained any reserve forces for 15 years without conscription. The neighboring states all have weapons and reservists with which the armies can be enlarged in case of mobilization. In the comparison of "K-strengths,"²⁰ Germany therefore comes off significantly 21 worse. The German 100,000 men are opposed in the "K-case" ²¹: 4.5 million French 3.2 million Poles 1.3 million Czechs 0.6 million Belgians 0.15 million Lithuanians²² With this ratio of war strengths close to 100 to 1 to Germany's disadvantage, it is not possible to make German foreign policy. To the disaster expressed here in numbers is added the fact that the German army is forbidden by the Versailles Treaty to possess heavy artillery and tanks. The German people and their Reichswehr were aware of this security situation of their country when Hitler became chancellor in 1933. What the normal feeling German citizen thinks at that time can obviously be felt in England. On November 29, 1934, the former British Prime Minister Lloyd George says in London before the House of Commons: "The signatory powers of the Treaty of Versailles solemnly promised the Germans that they would disarm if Germany went ahead with disarmament. Germany has waited fourteen years fulfillment of this promise. During this time a number of decidedly peaceable ministers have been active in Germany, ministers who have not ceased to implore the great powers finally to get serious about keeping the promise they made. These German ministers have been ... made fun of. In the meantime, all countries, ¹⁸ v. Oertzen, page 248, *MilHistory of the USSR Volume 1*, page 71 gives the French. ¹⁹ Maser, page 137 ²⁰ War Strengths ²¹ v. Oertzen, page 248, ²² Statkus, table without page numbers ²³⁰ with the exception of England, increased their war armament and even granted Germany's neighbors money loans with which they in turn built up enormous military organizations close to Germany's borders. Can we wonder, then, that in the end the Germans were driven to revolt against this chronic deception of the great ²³ powers." ²³ Lloyd George is silent about the fact that England also rearmed its fleet. The Geneva Disarmament Negotiations to 1933 On May 18, 1926, the League of Nations opens a pre-conference in Geneva for the disarmament conference that is to follow the consummation of the German troop and arms reductions. In January 1927, the Inter-Allied Military Commission of the victors states that the German Reich has disarmed in accordance with the Versailles Treaty. Now the victors would have to follow up with action. The German delegation at the conference in Geneva now demands that the armed forces of the other states be reduced to a comparably low level. It obviously dawned on the victorious states involved that they would now have to act. On February 27, 1927, Belgian Foreign Minister Vandervelde tells the conference, "From now on we are faced with the following dilemma: Either the other powers must reduce their armies in proportion to the German Reichswehr, or the peace treaty will lapse and Germany will claim for herself the right to possess armed forces capable of 24 defending the inviolability of her territory." ²⁴ Four and a half years of pre-conference pass without even the beginnings of a result. The victorious powers are not yet ready to disarm their armies, air forces, and navies at home and to comply with the articles of the Treaty of Versailles themselves. Instead, many countries continue to arm undaunted. On February 2, 1932, the disarmament conference of the League of Nations began in Geneva without any preliminary result.

Since the preliminary negotiations had already shown that no country was prepared to disarm to the level of the German Reich's armed forces, Germany now proposed an intermediate level of armaments for all. The level of this middle ground would have to be negotiated. In the event that this, too, is not accepted, the Reich Government demands a unilateral adjustment of German troop levels to those of comparable European states. 23 Bernhardt, page 151 24 Domarus, Vol. 1, page 508 [quoting Hitler] 231 For Germany, the weak Reichswehr is not merely an expression of a lack of state sovereignty. Rather, it is the very concrete problem of inadequate self-protection capability. The invasions of the British, French, Belgians, Lithuanians, and Poles between 1920 and 24 in the midst of the Versailles Peace, the still unresolved claims of the Poles for Silesia, East Prussia, and Pomerania, the superiority of the French and their allies over Germany in a ratio of 12 to 1 show everyone in Germany and especially in the Reichswehr that a 100,000-man army is not a permanent solution. Even the German signatures to two treaties cannot spur the disarmament negotiations of the League of Nations. In 1925, Germany and France conclude the Locarno Nonaggression Pact. In the process, the German Reich government definitively renounces Alsace-Lorraine. In 1928, the Reich government also signs the Briand-Kellogg Pact, which outlaws the use of war. Neither can persuade France now to renounce its 7-to-1 superiority over Germany. When Austria and Germany decide on a customs union in 1931, it becomes obvious that military power is not only for self-protection after the First World War. France vetoes the planned customs union, invoking Article 48 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, which declares Austria's independence inalienable and thus forever bars Vienna's ability to form an alliance. Austria and Germany, with no significant military behind them, have no chance of negotiating the Customs Union with France. France can prevent it at any time with its own military. Austria and Germany are not in a position to enforce their sovereign decision, which threatens no one, on their own. The German Imperial Government, with such small forces as the Reichswehr provides, is neither capable of protecting its own territory nor of pursuing sovereign foreign policy. From February to June 1932, negotiations are held at the League of Nations without the slightest results. There is neither agreement on the categories of weapons to be discussed nor on what is to be understood by an "attack". Even the proposal to raise the League's own troops dies as quickly as it is born. France, in particular, blocks the conference. Despite Germany's final recognition of France's borders, despite English and Italian guarantees of France's territorial inviolability, despite the obligation to disarm itself under the Versailles Treaty, France in 1932 is determined to prevent any adjustment of German troop levels. Rather, France itself wants to be allowed to continue arming at will. The German government now claims that Germany has been a full member of the League of Nations since 1927. It points out that the League of Nations, as a democratic assembly, consists of members with equal rights, and 232 that it will therefore henceforth no longer accept discriminatory special regulations that are to apply to Germany alone. In order to restart the negotiations, which had so far failed because of France, U.S. President Hoover introduces a new proposal on June 22, 1932. He suggests that all land and naval forces be reduced by one-third of their present numbers, that all bombers be scrapped, and that the bombing war be outlawed. The Soviet Union and Italy accept this immediately. Great Britain postpones its decision for the time being, and France flatly rejects the Hoover proposal. The Geneva conference on this plan from Washington ends after four weeks with the non-binding declaration that disarmament should be carried out worldwide. The final declaration is a label on an empty bottle. For Germany, the July 1932 round of negotiations is of particular importance. The German delegation tries to obtain recognition of equal rights for the German Reich in all armaments matters. But this fails. Germany is to remain in a second-class status according to the will of many other states. As a result, at the last session of this round, the head of the German delegation, the diplomat Nadolny, cancels the German Reich's cooperation for further conferences and departs from Geneva. The next round of negotiations is between France and the

German Reich alone. On August 28, 1932, German Foreign Minister von Neurath informs the government in Paris that future disarmament agreements reached in Geneva would, in his view, have to supersede the Versailles arms limitations for Germany. He makes it clear in the same note that Germany, for her part, is prepared to renounce all arms which all other powers also renounce. Von Neurath thereby indicates that Germany, as a full member of the League of Nations, otherwise claims for herself the right, like all other countries, to determine the size and armament of her own armed forces. The Reich government endeavors to make it easy for the French to make concessions. The following day, August 29, Foreign Minister von Neurath and Minister of Defense von Schleicher present François-Poncet, the French ambassador in Berlin, with a written summary of Germany's armament wishes. They assure the Frenchman that the German Reich will use the desired equal rights, once they have been granted in principle, "only to a limited extent." An additional contingent of troops for the army and prototypes of the previously forbidden weapons would already suffice²⁵. On September 11, 1932, the French government responded with a rather brusque note. In it it says that even all future results of negotiations at the League of Nations could not change the provisions of the Versailles Treaty ²⁵ François-Poncet, page 60 and Roos, Poland and Europe, page 50 233. Germany had undertaken in Article 164 of the treaty to continue to observe the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty even for later times when it should one day be a member of the League of Nations.²⁶ The reply from Paris robbed the Reich government in Berlin of its hitherto cherished belief that the problems of German security could be solved by the means of diplomacy. With its answer, France retreated to the formal interpretation of the Versailles Treaty. It makes it clear to the German side that it is trapped by the treaty. In France's view, membership in the League of Nations obligates the Germans to abide by the Treaty of Versailles in perpetuity. In essence, France is showing defeated Germany a way out of its misery.

out of its misery. The way is called withdrawal from the League of Nations and unilateral dissolution of the Versailles Treaty, which the other states themselves do not want to keep. The Locarno Treaty with the German guarantee of the western borders was not enough to induce France to accept Germany's equal right to security. Six years of French blockade in the League of Nations and in the Geneva disarmament negotiations are now making the German governments look for other ways and methods. Two days after the intransigent reply note from Paris, Foreign Minister von Neurath writes to his British colleague and president of the Geneva disarmament conferences that Germany will stay away from further talks "as long as the equality of rights has not been clarified." On September 28, 1932, at the opening of the next round of meetings, the German delegation failed to appear in Geneva. The negotiations thus effectively came to a standstill. Now England and Italy urged France to abandon its hard line. On December 11, 1932, there was a breakthrough, albeit a minor one. The governments of France, Great Britain, and Italy declare in a note "that Germany must be given equal rights in a security system valid for all 'nations' in the continuation of the Conference on Disarmament." The horseshoe of the note is the explicit remark "that the modalities of the application of such equality of rights must still be discussed at the Conference." ²⁷ Despite this horseshoe, it is now conceded that the ceilings on arms and troops agreed upon at the League of Nations are henceforth to apply to Germany as well, and that they supersede the limitations contained in Part V of the Treaty of Versailles. With this British-French-Italian note of December 11, 1932, the first step toward loosening the "fetters of Versailles" was taken. The Polish government, however, expressly declares that it does not recognize the equal rights now granted to Germany²⁸. ²⁶ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, p. 135 ²⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 3, p. 137 ²⁸ MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, Vol. 1, p. 374 234 This is the foreign and security policy situation of the German Reich when Adolf Hitler becomes German chancellor in January 1933. His inauguration is thus preceded by six and a half years of futile disarmament negotiations at the League of Nations. Germany at the time, 15 years after World War I, is still not capable of self-protection. All chances to integrate

the German Reich with acceptable treaties, which could have set measure and limits to the inevitable expansion of the Reichswehr, have been lost so far. The Secret Defense Preparations of the Reichswehr until 1933

Alongside all efforts of German foreign policy to restore the Reich's self-protection capability in agreement with the victorious powers, secret preparations are under way for a later reconstruction of German armed forces. The secrecy has good reasons. The measures, which are to serve the later security of one's own country, must not themselves become an occasion for a new war of the victors against Germany, which is no longer capable of defending itself. In February 1924, the Troops Office of the Reichswehr noted in an inventory that the ten divisions remaining to the Reich only had ammunition for an operational period of about one hour's fighting. The Truppenamt's report on this matter concludes that, in the event of war, Germany would of necessity have to rely on the stalling resistance of the frontier population. The report concludes with the remark: "Today and in the foreseeable future the initiation of war is only a heroic gesture. At the same time, the Reichsmarine is far below the number of ships granted at Versailles, and the German Reich is forbidden to possess an air force. Germany's inability to protect itself, the repeated incursions of foreign troops into German territory, and the challenged legitimacy of the imposed Treaty of Versailles lead the Reich leadership to begin early to prepare the reconstruction of the German Reich's ability to protect itself for later times. This is countered by the Treaty of Versailles, which, on top of everything else, had to be promulgated as Reich law in July 1919. The treaty not only limits the size of the army and the fleet. It also prohibits the Germans from possessing almost all modern weapons. Article 160 of the treaty also stipulates that the Reichswehr is to be used "exclusively for the 29 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, Vol. 1, Page 374 235 maintenance of order within German territory and as border police." This means nothing other than that the Reichswehr may not be called upon to defend the national territory. Despite these gag clauses, it remains natural law and generally accepted international law that the protection of one's citizens from external danger is one of the constitutive tasks and duties of the state, even of the defeated German state. Moreover, many of the victorious powers that decided and concluded the Treaty of Versailles begin to break it themselves soon after the war. France, for example, occupies the Saar region with military force, and Poland breaks the rules set in the treaty for the referendum in Upper Silesia, which is still German. Thus, it soon becomes a consensus among broad sections of the population, and especially among the Reichswehr, that the welfare of one's own country takes precedence over the imposed treaty, which was not honored by the victors themselves. In this sense, the Reichswehr leadership and, from 1927 on, the Reich government as well, try to rebuild the external security of the German Reich and its citizens past the Treaty of Versailles. However, part of the German reality in that period of the 1920s is that in the hopelessly divided party landscape of the then unconsolidated republic there were also forces skeptical of or even hostile to the Reichswehr, condemning and fighting the violations of the Treaty of Versailles. Therefore, a consensus of the entire German people against the treaty and in favor of the self-protection of the Weimar Republic did not come about. The preparations for the rearmament hoped for later took place secretly within the Reichswehr, from 1927 under political control and responsibility, and shielded from abroad until 1935. The preparations are manifold. They include both the development of modern weapons and the modern training of Reichswehr personnel. They also extend to the planning preparations for a later expansion of the small 100,000-man army and navy and for the hitherto forbidden buildup of German air forces. The preliminary work corresponds with the government's simultaneous diplomatic efforts to persuade the victorious powers at the Geneva disarmament negotiations to disarm themselves or to permit Germany's rearmament in moderation. The secret preparations for the later rebuilding of German forces naturally do not remain entirely hidden from the victorious powers. The consequences are frequent disgruntlements of the victors and sanctions against the defeated Germans. Thus, the delayed evacuation of the so-called Cologne Zone in 1925 and other

coercive measures taken by the victorious states against Germany are, among other things, the consequences of these secret defense preparations. 236 The Secret Defense Preparations in the Imperial Army Soon after the German defeat and the peace now actually concluded, it becomes apparent that the treaty signed at Versailles does not guarantee Germany's security. The resurgent Poland begins to seize German territory in Upper Silesia under the protection of the French. Thus, as early as 1921, the new Chief of Army Command, General von Seeckt, was forced to start thinking about a later reconstruction of German defense forces. On January 15, 1921, he set up a small working group of officers from his troop office, to which he gave the task of investigating the means and possibilities of a "Border Guard East. Seeckt's considerations were based on three scenarios: the subsequent mitigation of the Treaty of Versailles, the abrogation of the treaty, and an emergency situation in which Germany was attacked³⁰. The first thoughts about the increase of the 7 infantry divisions to 21 and the reintroduction of general conscription are born here, twelve years before the later chancellor Hitler takes up the idea. In 1923, Seeckt has the still open question of external security examined once again, and this time comprehensively and thoroughly. The result is a draft for a later "Grand Army" that is to be capable of protecting Germany in a multi-front war with a chance of success. The draft, which is available in 1925, envisions an army that would grow to 104 infantry, cavalry, and border guard divisions in the event of war with active and reserve divisions.³¹ At the time, the neighboring states, which had allied themselves with military treaties among themselves against the German Reich, had about 220 active and reserve divisions. The good hundred German divisions for the defense case are thus appropriate, but in 1925 politically and economically completely illusory. The draft for the Grand Army therefore does not go beyond deliberation and calculation. It is not a plan with binding force and fixed dates, even if it does serve as a guide for army buildup 15 years later. In May 1926, the aforementioned preliminary negotiations for disarmament of all states in Europe begin at the League of Nations and in Geneva. The government of the Reich, however, must

to note that the victorious states, first and foremost France, lack the willingness to disarm themselves. It can therefore expect that this will open up certain margins for Germany's troop strength. Thus, in September 1928, after two years of fruitless negotiations, the German army command drafted a plan to replenish the ten active divisions of the Reichswehr by mobilizing divisions to form a 16-division army in the event of an external attack. The first equipment, ammunition, and reservists for the reserve divisions were to be procured and trained by 1932. Under the impression of the high number of army forces of all neighboring countries and in view of the further inconclusiveness of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, Reichswehr Minister Groener expands the planning for the 16-division army to 21 divisions two years later³³. In April 1930, Groener stipulates in a directive entitled "The Tasks of the Army" that the 10 peacetime divisions may be supplemented by 11 mobilization divisions only in the event of an attack on Reich territory by foreign states. Even this amount of Army forces is very small compared to that already maintained by Germany's neighbors in peacetime. In 1932, the planning figures for the 21-division army are twice specified. In the spring of 32, Minister Groener issues the 2nd Armament Program and in it sets the defense strength at 570,000 men as well as the ammunition supply for the force for a deployment period of 6 weeks. On September 11, 1932, the French government puts an end to the German quest for consensus. Foreign Minister Barthou declares on behalf of France that even any future results of negotiations at the League of Nations in Geneva should have no effect on Reichswehr troop levels. The spirit of Franco-German rapprochement from the time of Foreign Ministers Briand and Stresemann is thus evidently exhaled and exhausted in 1932. After six years of negotiations, this was unacceptable to the Reich government in view of the still high armament levels of all neighboring states and also in view of the many "invasions" of foreign troops since the First World War. It drew the consequences and increased the peacetime strength of the 100,000-man army to

175,000. This was to be achieved in stages up to 1938. The number of peacetime divisions was nevertheless to remain unchanged. Thus the government under Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen had already thrown off the first shackle of Versailles before Adolf Hitler became the new chancellor in 1933. When Hitler assumed government responsibility a quarter of a year later, he initially continued von Papen's armaments policy in moderation. This is one of those reasons why, in the German Reich of Hitler's early years, no one at first suspects that Hitler will one day pervert the purpose of the rebuilt Reichswehr. The secret defense preparations of the Reichsmarine The conditions in the Reichsmarine do not look much different from those in the army. Under the Treaty of Versailles, the fleet is allotted only 15,000 men and a 32 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, p. 379 33 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, p. 384 238 small number of ships: 8 ships of the line, 8 small cruisers³⁴, a few torpedo boats and the necessary auxiliary ships. Newbuildings, within the total tonnage now limited to 144,000 tons for the fleet, were not permitted

again until 1922. Germany, in its post-World War I position, needs a fleet for two purposes. It must be able to keep open the sea routes in the run-up to its ports for imports of raw materials and foodstuffs, and it must be able to protect the sea route on the Baltic to East Prussia, now cut off on land, against interruption. Both tasks are current despite the peace that has been concluded. The vulnerability of imports by sea was demonstrated by the British in 1919, when, despite the "freedom of the seas in peace and war" ³⁵ promised in Wilson's 14 points, they "helped" the German signature of the Treaty of Versailles with a blockade of the German North Sea and Baltic Sea ports. The result was famine in Germany and Austria. The second task for the fleet resulted from the separation of East Prussia from the territory of the Reich and from France's policy toward Poland. The Polish press, and with it probably wide circles there, continue to lay claim to parts of German territory which they demanded for themselves at Versailles but did not receive in 1919, parts of Silesia, East Prussia and parts of Pomerania. After the Polish attempt to conquer eastern Upper Silesia in 1921, such claims from Poland were taken quite seriously in Germany. However, Poland only became a heavyweight from the German point of view after a French-Polish military treaty of 1925, in which France undertook to send a French naval squadron to the Baltic Sea to support Poland in the event of a German-Polish conflict. Fatal to this for Germany is the French promise to provide this support, no matter what the cause of the conflict might be. This is a quasi-offer even in the event that Poland launches an attack on East Prussia, Pomerania or Silesia on its own initiative. Since the conclusion of the Polish-French military treaty, the strategic naval concept of the Reichsmarine has therefore been based on the threat that Poland might pose to France's fleet. Thus, the Reichsmarine needs ships equal in number and quality to those of the French. In 1928, the first major post-war construction was ordered, a 10,000-ton tanker. The Treaty of Versailles allows 20-year-old ships to be replaced. In 1930, the keel of the armored ship is laid, marking the start of the replacement of the six now 30-year-old capital ships from the imperial era. In November 1932, Admiral Raeder, Chief of Naval Operations, submits a "1st Navy Reconstruction Plan" in parallel with the Army Plan for the 175,000-man Army. The plan includes the later construction of an aircraft carrier, the commissioning of U-boats ³⁴ including reserve ships ³⁵ item 2 of the 14 items ²³⁹ ten, the construction of larger cruisers than permitted, the establishment of a naval air force, and a minor increase in personnel. Thus, here too, the shackles of Versailles are thrown off before Hitler becomes chancellor. The secret preparations for the establishment of an air force To have air forces is forbidden to Germany since Versailles. Secret preparations for the later establishment of an air force are rather modest after the First World War. Starting in 1926, the victorious powers allow the German Reich to build civilian aircraft and permit a strictly limited number of Reich military officers to engage in air sports. With this and the German-Soviet cooperation at the Lipetsk airfield in Russia described later, the industry gathers its experience for military aircraft construction, and the Reichswehr begins to train

pilots. From 1929, the Army Weapons Office ventured into military aircraft construction against the prohibition of the victors. It invited tenders for the construction of a close reconnaissance aircraft, a long-range reconnaissance aircraft, a fighter and a bomber³⁶. The prototypes from this tender go to Lipetsk for testing. In 1930, the Chief of the Army Staff defined an "Fliegerrüstungsvorhaben" for the period 1931 to 1937. This still envisages aviation squadrons only for army support and no air force as a new third part of the Wehrmacht. With this intermediate step, Germany also breaks away from the Versailles prohibitions. Secret Preparations in the General Wehrmacht Preparations for normal later times are not limited solely to plans for raising reserve divisions for the defense case and for building more modern ships for a larger fleet. They consist above all of a modernization of the military system in Germany in all its branches. Thus, Reichswehr NCOs are trained to a degree that prepares many of them for future officer duties. In the large army of the later Wehrmacht, many of them will make up no small proportion of the lower officer corps. The Reichswehr officers are also prepared for higher leadership tasks, the leadership of units and large units that do not yet exist in the Reichswehr. Thus, the small 100,000-man army builds up the officer corps of the later large Wehrmacht. The German-Soviet cooperation belongs to the same context. In 1922, parallel to their Rapallo Agreement, the Reich and the Soviet Union conclude a secret treaty on limited cooperation between the Reichswehr and the Soviet Army. As a result of this agreement, German officers are trained as pilots in Lipetsk and as tank soldiers in Kama. At 36 Schliephake, page 26 240 des is prohibited in Germany. The Reichswehr can gain its first experience in Russia for the construction of modern armored vehicles and combat aircraft. Furthermore, German officers, engineers and companies, who want to make their contribution to the defense capability of their own country, develop prototypes for modern weapons at home and abroad, which are still forbidden to Germany. The production of the weapons always takes place abroad, often by "joint-venture companies." The new weapons are then sold to the armed forces in the country of manufacture, sometimes also to third countries. The finished products never benefit the Reichswehr in Germany itself, but the knowledge gained from their development and construction does. And what counts no less are the experiences of the companies involved for the later industrial production in Germany from 1933 on.

In the 1920s and 1930s, submarines based on German designs were developed and built in Spain, Finland and the Netherlands, and some of them were bought by the navies of third countries³⁷. German bombers were created in England, flying boats in Spain, and reconnaissance aircraft in the United States. Some of the resulting new developments subsequently go into license construction at Mitsubishi and Kawasaki in Japan³⁸. The modernization of the military in defeated Germany received other important impulses from abroad in the 1920s and 1930s. While the Reichswehr leadership has to take into account the military impotence at home and develops defensive strategies to protect the Reich, the thoughts and ideas of experts elsewhere take completely new paths. There is General Douhet in Italy with a modern doctrine for air warfare. There are Colonels Fuller in England, de Gaulle in France, Generals Eimannsberger in Austria and Tuchachevsky in the Soviet Union, conceiving the war of movement of the future. Young Reichswehr officers pick up what is written elsewhere and develop the land and air war strategies for their own future in their minds. This is important preparatory work for the later reconstruction of a German Wehrmacht. Thus, it is precisely in the years of extensive defenselessness that the qualities are formed in the German Reich that initially make the Wehrmacht far superior to the armies of other countries in 1939. These are the leadership ability of the officer corps and the non-commissioned officers, the know-how of industry and a modern concept for leadership, armament and structure. After 1945, those accused as war criminals at Nuremberg were accused of having worked toward a new world war even before Hitler's time. Former Reich Chancellor Wirth, chancellor from 1921-22 and Reichs 37 Dreessen, page 79 38 Kens/Novarra, page 16 241 minister from 1929-31,

testifies to this insinuation before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg as a witness of this period: "All German governments between 1918 and 1933 and the German Army Command were animated by concern for the existence of the Reich, which they saw threatened in domestic and foreign policy. Already in the first years after World War I, Poland had repeatedly attempted to separate parts of the Reich's territory from the Reich by force. The fear of further attacks was not unfounded. Nationalist Polish circles demanded further secessions of territory. At the same time, the armament of our Reichswehr was pitiful. Reich Chancellor Dr. Brüning and Reich Minister of Defense Groener therefore decided to evacuate Silesia in the event of an attack by the Poles. In view of the lamentable situation on Germany's eastern borders, it was only natural to keep a lookout for ways to improve the situation in terms of defense policy." 39 Hitler and the Geneva disarmament negotiations until 1934 On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became the new German chancellor. He picks up the thread of the Geneva disarmament negotiations as quickly as possible, but without initially demanding more troops or additional weapons for the German Reich. In March 1933, six weeks after Hitler took office, British Prime Minister MacDonald presented a new proposal to the Geneva disarmament conference. According to this proposal, Germany is to be granted an army of 200,000 men. France is to reduce its land forces to 200,000 troops in Europe plus 200,000 in the colonies. For Italy, the proposal calls for 200,000 in the mother country and 50,000 more in the colonies. For the Soviet Union, MacDonald plans 500,000, for Poland 200,000, and for Czechoslovakia 100,000 men. A major part of the proposal is that France, England, Belgium, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland may maintain air forces, but Germany may not. All nations concerned except Italy and France agree to the MacDonald proposal. Italy demands more troops for the colonies and France flatly rejects the proposal. The whole world is wondering these days how the new German chancellor will react to the offer from England. On May 17, 1933, Hitler gives his official answer to the British prime minister in a government statement before the Reichstag: 39 Defense Document Book 2a on the Krupp Trial, No. 47 242 "... The German Reich Government sees in the British plan a possible basis for the solution of these questions. In so doing, Germany agrees in the main to accept a transitional period of five years for the establishment of its national security in the expectation that after this time the real equality of Germany with the other states will take place. Further, the German Government will not reject any arms ban as too drastic if it is applied in the same way to the other States." 40 Almost simultaneously, U.S. President Roosevelt, also freshly in office, appeals in a peace message to 44 heads of state to abolish entirely all offensive weapons such as bombers, tanks, and motorized heavy artillery. Hitler also responded to this Rooseveltian offer in the Reichstag speech already quoted: "The proposal of the American President Roosevelt, of which I received knowledge this night, therefore obliges the German Government to express warm thanks. It is prepared to agree to this method of remedying the international crisis.... Germany is ready at any time to renounce offensive weapons if the rest of the world will do the same." Hitler, like his predecessors in office, thus demands equal treatment for Germany. He concedes to the other states a transition period of five years and at the same time refuses that only Germany should not be permitted to possess air forces. In the event that Germany should not be treated equally after all, despite the Franco-British-Italian declaration of December 11, 1932, Hitler already announces the possibility of German withdrawal from the League of Nations. Hitler's reaction is seen as appropriate in Germany. Six and a half years of futile disarmament negotiations have left the impression that the League of Nations is unsuitable as a forum to set in motion the promised disarmament of the victorious powers, especially France. In Germany, moreover, people still remember how their own country, as victor, dealt with defeated France 48 years ago. France had caused, declared, started and lost the war of 1870. Nevertheless, the German occupation troops had already left two years after France's defeat and no limits had been imposed on the defeated French in terms of weapons, army and fleet. For this reason,

too, every reasonably historically savvy German citizen, 15 years after World War I, feels that France's harsh attitude was completely excessive and approves of Hitler's demand for adequate and equal security for Germany. 40 Domarus, Vol. 1, pp. 276 f 243 What Hitler expresses on the international stage is unsuspecting and does not foreshadow his opening a war six years later. Even the generals of the Reichswehr, who have followed the Geneva negotiations and who know the troop strengths of all neighboring states around Germany, have no reason to conclude from Hitler's reaction to the Mac Donald and the Roosevelt proposal, with some sense of reality, already more than that this is about Germany's self-protection. Even the 200,000 soldiers offered to Berlin would, after the disarmament of all neighboring countries, be less than one-third of what the Poles, Czechs, Belgians, and French, allied against Germany, would bring to the scales. However, according to experts, one-third troop strength and armament is considered the minimum condition for a defense with a chance of success. Thus it can also be understood that the Reichswehr leadership would not accept a German sole renunciation of air power. Seen from this perspective, it is obvious that the generals initially took Hitler's negotiating position in Geneva and his armament policy for granted. In a speech given by Hitler to the commanders of the Reichswehr on February 3, 1933, when he had just taken office, he emphasized his intention to rebuild the Reichswehr. That he also speaks in this speech of the new "living space in the East" that Germany's rapidly growing population will need in the future should have given the generals a warning. But the subject of "Lebensraum im Osten" is so intangible and concrete in this early Hitler speech that the warning is not understood. The Lebensraum in the East is then no longer an issue for Hitler before the generals, even for a long time. The significance of the said February speech of 1933 will be considered again in the following book chapter. The reaction of most states to Hitler's government declaration of May 15, 1933, on the British and American disarmament and rearmament proposals is thoroughly positive and optimistic. Nevertheless, nothing at all can be moved with the Mac Donald proposal. France complained about the SA units⁴¹ in Germany and disagreed with 200,000 soldiers for the German army. It complains about the British naval superiority and wants to negotiate the size of the fleet. France is not satisfied with 400,000 soldiers, and on top of that it demands the testing of a control system to monitor all disarmament before it begins. After the experience that the Interallied Control Commission has just gained

has been able to make with the supervision of German disarmament for only seven years, this French demand is nothing but a transparent game for time. Despite Hitler's politically moderate tones at the beginning, suspicion immediately arose abroad in many places. As early as May 1, 1933, the British head of the delegation to the Nazi armaments conference in Geneva sent a harsh report to London in which the author, an army general, complained about the change in the national mood among the Germans. He enumerates German "misdeeds": the establishment of a Reich Labor Service⁴², the construction and ownership of 125 military aircraft, the military organization and arming of police forces, and so on. The reporter notes as early as May 1933, barely after the Reichswehr had begun reconstruction, that this was a threat to neighboring states. He calls for the enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles and concludes the report with his verdict on Germany: "There is another rabid dog running around outside. We must stand together resolutely and either destroy him or lock him up until the disease is over." ⁴³ The report, with an approving note from Under Secretary of State Vansittart at the London Foreign Office, is circulated to the House departments. When the round of negotiations over the Mac Donald plan ends inconclusively on June 5, 1933, Nadolny, the head of the German delegation, declares that unless results are obtained in negotiations within another year, Germany will take the liberty of rearming herself without any further treaty basis. In plain language, this means that the victorious powers must themselves undertake to disarm by the summer of 1934 or Germany will rearm. In January 1934, Adolf Hitler asks the negotiating partners in Geneva for 300,000 soldiers for the Reichswehr. The British

government then tries to mediate between France and Germany and proposes a figure between 2 and 300,000 men for Germany. Hitler accepts the compromise. France rejects it. French Foreign Minister Barthou demands that colonial troops be excluded from disarmament, from which Germany would gain no advantage, and he demands that SA units be included in the German troop count. Moreover, Barthou insists that the provisions of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles remain binding on Germany even if the disarmament negotiations should reveal otherwise. Now it is Hitler again who goes a long way toward accommodating France. He offers to disarm and demilitarize the SA entirely⁴⁴. He settles for an air force not to exceed 50% of the French. He declares Germany's renunciation of bombers if an agreement with France is reached. And Hitler accepts the French wish to abolish 42 Reich Labor Service. Only from 1935 compulsory service for young men and women over the age of 18 to 6 months of civilian work, from 1939 also to fortress construction⁴³ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Second Series, Volume V, Document 127⁴⁴ The SA is a thorn in Hitler's side in 1934 anyway. It became increasingly paramilitary and eluded his influence.²⁴⁵ The British agreed to wait five years before starting to build fortifications in the other countries⁴⁵. Italy meanwhile agrees to the British compromise proposal, but France does not give in. On April 17, 1934, Barthou rejected the British mediation proposal and the German concession in an official note. It states that "the French government solemnly refuses to agree to German rearmament, " that " German rearmament would nullify all negotiations," and that "France will henceforth guarantee its security by its own means." ⁴⁶ English politician Lloyd George comments on the Barthou note four days later before the House of Commons in London. He says that the reaction from Paris stems from the fact that "for years, if not longer, France has refused to honor its commitment to disarm itself, and that even after Locarno it has increased its ⁴⁷ armaments from year to year." ⁴⁷ After the Barthou note of April 1934, the Geneva disarmament negotiations finally failed. Here France announces that in the future it will no longer base its national security on limiting the armaments of all states, but solely on the strength of the French army. This is the starting signal for a new arms race in Europe. The chance of the victors of 1918 to integrate post-war Germany by means of universally accepted arms control treaties has been lost.

France's paranoia about Germany and its greed for its own importance have pushed open even the floodgates that France had wanted to keep closed. Germany demanded its self-protection capability and offered restrictions on troop strengths and weapons in return. A single such German offer is accepted by the British in 1935, the British-German Naval Agreement, in which the German government limits the strength of the Reichsmarine to 35% of the Royal Navy. The agreement holds until shortly before the outbreak of war, when the British support the Poles in the Danzig question. ⁴⁵ Benoist-Mechin, vol. 3, p. 156 ⁴⁶ Rassinier, p. 83 ⁴⁷ Rassinier, p. 83 ²⁴⁶ The Arms Race Beginning in 1933 In 1933 and thereafter, there are four events that trigger a new wave of armaments in Europe, America, and Asia. The first are two significant changes of government almost at the same time. In Germany and the USA, two politicians take power at the beginning of 1933 who see armaments as a means of their foreign and economic policy. The second is the German demand in Geneva that all states reduce their troops as agreed, and the announcement that if nothing is done, Germany will rearm the Reichswehr a year later. The third event is a bundle of compromise proposals on arms numbers ceilings from Washington and London, which the Reich government accepts, and which France rejects outright. The fourth momentous event is France's reaction to Germany's incipient rearmament: Barthou's declaration "France will from now on guarantee its security by its own means." This opens all the floodgates. Naval Armament 1933 to 1939 German naval armament, although totally insignificant in real quantities, is probably one of the reasons why Britain sides with Poland in 1939, declares war on the German Reich, and expands this war from the local conflict over Danzig and the "Corridor" to a world war in just two days. For this reason, the armament of the navies will be treated first and in detail. German naval

armament after Hitler took office reflects two distinct developments and changes. One is the arms race that the great maritime nations had begun earlier. The other is a swing in Hitler's foreign policy toward Great Britain in 1937. By then, the dictator was endeavoring to win England's partnership through maritime self-restraint. When that is unsuccessful, he tries to force the partnership, or in its place, British neutrality, by means of a large fleet. First, a look at what is moving around the world. In 1932, the 10-year construction freeze on capital ships established in the Washington Fleet Agreement has expired, during which time the naval effort of all nations had shifted its emphasis to the modernization of light naval forces. Starting in 1932, the major naval powers began to lay the keels of battleships, aircraft carriers and cruisers again and to build them. In 1933, when Hitler took office, the German Reichsmarine had heavy warships with a combined displacement of 104,000 tons. England's Royal Navy at the time, with its aircraft carriers, battle cruisers and 247 destroyers, has a combined displacement of 1,210,000 tons. That is almost twelve times as much. France's fleet, at 487,000 tons, is four and a half times as large as the German Reichsmarine⁴⁸. In a comparison of the world's large fleets, it ranks 7th in terms of tonnage and number of main combat ships. At the beginning of the war, six years later, the German Kriegsmarine will still rank 7th, despite its own armament. Only the ranking for the number of U-boats will have shifted slightly by then. In early 1933, Roosevelt, the former undersecretary of the Navy, becomes the new president of the United States. His country has 12.8 million people out of work at the time, a quarter of the working-age population. In one of his first official acts under the New Deal program,⁴⁹ Roosevelt declares warship construction a job-creation measure and immediately has the U.S. Congress approve the construction of two aircraft carriers and 20 destroyers and anchor them in the budget. In 1934 the next push follows, an eight-year construction program of 120 ships⁵⁰. Thus, as early as 1933, the naval power USA was preparing to take military action against states such as Japan, the Soviet Union, Italy or Germany in the still undetermined future, should they attempt to change the status quo of powers and weights on the globe. England also begins to ramp up the pace of shipbuilding again in 1931. This is followed in 1934 by the keel laying of 2 aircraft carriers, which are completed in 1936. In 1937, 3 more are launched, and 2 more in 1938. Otherwise the English production increases from 1936 on 2 battleships, 7 light cruisers and

17 destroyers each year⁵¹. In 1931, France decides to build a new and larger battleship class of 26,000 tons and includes the funds for it in the budget⁵². Construction of the first ship of the new class, the "Dunkerque," begins as early as 1932. From 1934, France and Italy try to outbid each other in the size of their ships and replace old ships with new ones. However, their fleets grow neither in tonnage nor in number of ships. Starting in 1931, the German Reichsmarine begins to replace its liners, which are now 30 years old⁵³. Admiral Raeder, the head of the naval command, still adheres to the total tonnage limit of 144,000 tons for the fleet set in Versailles. But he is already having the replacements designed somewhat larger than is permitted for the type classes under the Versailles treaties. ⁴⁸ Weyers 1934 ⁴⁹ Program to stimulate the American economy ⁵⁰ Potter/Nimitz, page 472 ⁵¹ Dreessen, page 105 u. Weyers Flottenkalender 1939, pages 416ff ⁵² The up to then largest French. Liners had 23,500 tons displacement. The English battleship HOOD, however, already had 42,000 tons. ⁵³ Today, the large container ships are scrapped after about 15 years. ²⁴⁸ Raeder believes he can justify this breach of contract in view of the ever larger ships in foreign fleets and in view of the many breaches of the Treaty of Versailles by the victors⁵⁴. Admiral Raeder's "1st Shipbuilding Replacement Plan" is designed to last until 1946. Until 1933, 3 new ships are laid on keel, in France in the same period ⁸¹⁵⁵. Germany's security interests at sea are at that time mainly related to France and to the Soviet Union. Despite all the Franco-German treaties, the French government pursues a clearly anti-German course in its other alliances and in the disarmament negotiations of the League of Nations. And Russia is the potential adversary that could cut off German iron ore and mine timber imports on the Baltic in a crisis. When

the victorious states in 1932 still do not want to follow their Versailles disarmament obligations, when the disarmament negotiations from February to September are fruitless, the German Reich government draws its consequences from the breach of the treaty by the victorious states. It decides to bring the Reichswehr roughly in line with the size of the French forces in Europe. For the Reichsmarine, this means a growth of 1 to 4. Thus, in October 1932, the "1st Reconstruction Plan of the Reichsmarine" is created, according to which it is to grow to the size of the fleet of France in the following six years. The Reichsmarine thus has ships for about 480,000 tons in its inventory, in replacement construction and in its planning. This, too, is a clear breach of the Treaty of Versailles, which had been broken many times before by the victorious states. The new planning is initially kept secret from the victorious powers and from the League of Nations for fear of backlash. The Reichsmarine's operational plans from 1925, which are still valid, provide for two options, defending the Baltic Sea approaches against French squadrons and protecting its own supplies over the sea from French ships⁵⁶. 1933 – 1934 When Admiral Raeder presents the details of his 1st conversion plan to Adolf Hitler soon after the latter takes office in February 1933, the latter raises objections⁵⁷. Hitler seeks a balance of interests with Great Britain and, if possible, its alliance partnership. Therefore, in his view, his own fleet armament must not send the wrong signal to Britain. Despite this Hitler veto, the French navy initially remains Raeder's benchmark. When it became known in June 1934 that Italy planned to lay the keel for two capital ships of 35,000 tons and even larger guns than had previously existed, and the rumor followed that France wanted to follow suit, Raeder also planned in that direction⁵⁸. 54 Raeder also takes advantage of a new basis for calculating ship sizes that became internationally accepted in 1922, the "standard displacement" 55 Salewski, page 116 56 Salewski, page 136 57 Raeder, Vol. 1, pages 280 f 58 Salewski, page 142 249 For the years in which the German fleet is still inferior to the French in terms of the number of ships, Raeder develops a naval strategy concept that is intended to deprive the French of their advantage⁵⁹. In the future, the Reichsmarine should not only protect its own sea connections and the Baltic Sea from the French fleet. At the same time, in the event of war, it should itself use heavy ships to interfere with French supplies and troop transports on the Atlantic and interrupt them as far as possible. The Atlantic capability for this purpose now demands larger ships again. Thus an arms pull toward ever more powerful warships is created. 1935 In January 1935, Hitler expresses for the first time to a member of the British House of Lords that he is prepared to limit the Reichsmarine to 35% of the strength of the Royal Navy. England sees its own benefit from this offer and accepts, although the 35% for Germany violates the Treaty of Versailles, which from England's point of view is still in force. On June 18, 1935, a "Anglo-German Naval Agreement" is signed by both sides. The treaty limits German fleet strengths in all ship classes to 35% of England's. For submarines, 45% is fixed, which may be expanded to 100% according to later agreements, if Germany renounces tonnage in other ship classes in return. England's naval armament at the time must balance the fleet competition of Italy in the Mediterranean and Japan in the Pacific. So London is happy to at least have its back to the Reichsmarine in the Atlantic. The British are not interested in anything else, especially not a partnership with Germany. In this respect, Hitler was mistaken about the effect he hoped the treaty would have. After the conclusion of the naval agreement, the naval leadership in Berlin replaces the 1st conversion plan of 1932 in November with a "draft shipbuilding replacement plan" that lays down a construction program until 1946. The new plan reduces the planned ship tonnage from 480,000 tons to about 420,000. With the 35% of the Royal Navy now stipulated by treaty, the Reichsmarine theoretically has parity with France, which itself had previously been allowed to maintain only 35% of England's fleet strength under the 1922 and 1930 naval agreements. However, the parity is and remains fictitious until the beginning of the war, because France's fleet exists and Germany's battle fleet is never built. In 1935, another attempt by the British to halt their arms race with their other competitors fails. They convene a

third fleet conference in London. There, the Japanese demand the same fleet size as the U.S. 59 Rahn, page 90 250 They do not want to accept this, but demand the same naval strength themselves that Great Britain has. Britain wants to build more cruisers and destroyers, but in reduced ship sizes, which would then apply to all. Italy wants to achieve unconditional equality with France. France, however, does not want its ships in the colonies or those in the Atlantic to be included in the comparison of fleets. Thus the conference ends with an agreement on the lowest common denominator, the limitation of tonnage and armament for certain classes of ships. Tying German naval size to the British means that the 35% is a measure of increase for Germany, as the British continue to rearm. Nevertheless, the naval leadership does not abide by the growth limits conceded. In an effort to have ships equal to the French in naval engagements, almost all plans for the new ironclads and cruisers exceed the maximum tonnage figures set. When Raeder has the Naval Construction Department take stock of new battleship construction at the end of 1935, he finds that he has gone far overboard with plans, and that continued construction would exceed the tonnages allowed in 1938 or 39 and break the Anglo-German Fleet Agreement. Nevertheless, the admiral put no brakes on the buildup. Only the lack of steel, of shipyards and of money ensures that the German navy never exceeds the 35% of the Royal Navy⁶⁰. From the beginning of the war, only the U-boats laid down on keel are an exception to this. Thus Raeder's breach of contract remains a bad intention lacking the power to act. 1936 1937 In 1936, 37 and 38, Hitler begins to realize that his hopes regarding England are deceiving him. The government in London has pocketed the naval agreement and, from the German point of view, has given nothing in return. Hitler's ideas for the far future revolve around a partnership with England in which the British remain the unchallenged ruler of their world empire as a naval power, and in which Germany exercises its supremacy as a land and air power in an economic area or group of states in southeastern Europe. Hitler has also long believed that the rivalries and problems Britain has worldwide with France, the Soviet Union, the U.S., Japan, and Italy would cause Germany, with a respectable fleet, to become an interesting ally. Thus, he is pursuing a dual strategy with the 35% limit on the German fleet. On the one hand, the self-restraint is intended to reassure England, and on the other hand, the nonetheless respectable size of the navy is intended to make the German Empire an attractive partner. After all, the U.S. was preparing to displace England as the first naval power, and in the Soviet Union, Stalin ordered in 1935 that a battle fleet be built up by 1947 that would be equal to the fleets of America and England ⁶⁰ Dreessen, pg.

297 251 equal. There, a German junior partner on the seas might be important to the British in the future. Hitler's 1936 effort to conclude pacts with England's rivals, namely Japan and Italy, are also attempts to persuade the British to seek Germany's friendship after all. 1938 In the spring of 1938 Hitler sees that he is obviously failing in this. In May he tells Admiral Raeder that he must reckon with England being on the enemy side in future conflicts, i.e. on the side of France as in World War I. Hitler's confidence in the British is waning. From this point on, Hitler's assessments of the British reaction fluctuate. On the one hand, he often says before generals that England will certainly not tolerate a further rise of Germany. And on the other hand, before each subsequent event – the annexation of Austria, the annexation of the Czech Republic, and the attack against Poland – he asserts that he is certain that England will not budge, which means he is right twice and wrong once. For Raeder, warlike confrontations at that time are theoretically not far-fetched. The revision of Germany's eastern border with Poland, the return of Memel, and the lot of the Sudeten Germans under foreign rule are still open problems that could lead to war with France or Poland. By Hitler's new reckoning, this would put not only the Allies of France, the Poles, the Soviets, and the Czechs on the list of potential adversaries, but now Britain as well. The consequences were fatal. In the fall of 1938, German-British relations deteriorated noticeably when Hitler threatened to wage war if necessary to bring the Sudeten Germans home. England agreed to the annexation of the Sudetenland at the Munich

Conference, but only five days later, on October 5, 1938, the House of Commons in London doubled the funds for the defense budget from 400 to 800 million pounds sterling⁶¹. With Munich, the mood of the British toward Germany tilted. At the time, another problem festers. In the past two years, the Soviet Union's submarine armament has assumed an extent that becomes a lurking danger to German import routes on the Baltic Sea and ferry connections to East Prussia, which is still cut off⁶². To counterbalance the threat, the Reich government makes use of the clause in the Anglo-German Naval Treaty that allows the total tonnage of the German submarine fleet to be raised to that of the British after advance notice, regardless of the number of boats in each case. The Reich government addresses 61 Rassinier, page 214 62 Weyers, Volumes 1937-1939 252 a corresponding request to England in December 1938⁶³. The British government tries to dissuade the German from taking this step and sends Admiral Cunningham, Chief of Staff of the Admiralty, to Berlin on December 30 to persuade the German side to make the U-boat increase slowly and in installments. Hitler refuses. Cunningham comments on the futile mission, saying, "It was perfectly clear that the war could not be postponed indefinitely and that Britain would be drawn into it." ⁶⁴ Since Cunningham does not speak of preventing but of postponing, and since one can only postpone what one is able to influence oneself, it cannot be ruled out in this comment of the admiral that he believes that England must put an end to the German fleet buildup with a war into which she should, however, allow herself to be "dragged into". In view of the new tensions with England, but before the Cunningham visit, Admiral Raeder sets up a planning committee in October 38 to examine the consequences of this unpleasant development: Germany's own measures in the event of war with the naval power England. The committee came to the recommendation to avoid an open naval battle with the Royal Navy in any case. At best, the German navy would have a vague chance of cutting off the British's overseas connections by a cruiser war on the high seas. The outcome of such a war, however, remained completely open. The Naval Warfare Administration's planning committee also mentions the idea that, faced with a German threat at sea, the British might be more inclined to a peaceful understanding than to risk the security of their overseas connections in a war with Germany⁶⁵. The naval warfare command, and at its head Raeder, thus plan to fight England's supply in the event of war. They have no intention of going to war with England for its world empire. In November 1938, Raeder presents the result of this investigation to Hitler. He proposes to accelerate further naval buildup to undermine English countermeasures. But Hitler, out of the blue, no longer agrees with the size of the fleet planned so far. He demands even faster and even more powerful battleship construction than Raeder considers appropriate. After an argument in which the admiral asks for his leave - which Hitler refuses - Raeder, ignoring the Anglo-German Fleet Agreement, has an ocean-going fleet designed which, in the event of war, is to lead the fight for England's supply on the seas. After two draft plans, "Plan X" and "Plan Y", in the fall and winter of 1938, the Mari ⁶³ Potter/Nimitz page 465 ⁶⁴ Güth, page 152 ⁶⁵ Rahn, page 92 253 neileitung Hitler submits the so-called "Z-Plan" for a new, large fleet in January. At 1,654,395 tons,⁶⁶ it includes a navy that is gigantic for Germany, with 10 battleships and 15 armored ships, with 3 aircraft carriers, 43 cruisers, 87 destroyers and 249 submarines, which are to be available as of 1947⁶⁷. The planned completion date is then brought forward to 1945

at Hitler's insistence. 1939 With the step from the "Draft Shipbuilding Replacement Plan" of November 1935, which envisages a total tonnage of 475,000¹ by 1946, to the "Z-Plan" with its over 1.6 million tons by 1945, the Kriegsmarine makes a planning leap of 1 to 3. But the leap does not get beyond the fatal intention. The German Reich lacks shipyards, steel and money. At the beginning of 1939, before the leap, the Kriegsmarine stands at only 200,311 tons. The strength ratio between the German fleet and those of France and England is thus still 1 to 2 to 668. Although the Z-Plan is a gigantic project, it is not based on any new strategic idea. The naval leadership is still thinking of cruiser

and submarine warfare as a way of paying back in kind the usual British blockade in the event of war. And Hitler gives no reasons except his fear of British intervention in case of further revisions of the Versailles territorial losses. With the Z-Plan, Hitler and the leadership of the navy are planning for 1945 to exceed the tonnage allotted to them under the 1935 naval agreement. But England is not yet informed of this. In March, as part of its reporting obligations under the Fleet Agreement, the British naval leadership, for its part, announces that the Royal Navy is to grow to almost 2 million tons by 1943. This would have allowed the German navy to grow to nearly 700,000 tons, more than the German shipyards could have completed. But Hitler and the admiral do not want to reveal to England the immense armaments they are planning for 1945. Hitler resorted to the dubious expedient of removing the 35% ceiling. He terminates the British-German naval agreement at the next available opportunity. In mid-March 1939, Hitler has Czechoslovakia occupied. In response, England offers Poland a guarantee against Germany. Hitler calls this an anti-German act and takes the Polish-British treaty as an opportunity to terminate the naval agreement. This frees Germany from any obligation to adhere to upper limits in naval armament. But instead of strengthening Germany's security with forced warship construction, Hitler gives England 66 Dreessen, page 151 67 Dreessen, pages 111-113, 151 68 Dreessen, pages 144f 254 a reason to stop armament with the help of a new war. Thus, the British seized the next opportunity Germany offered them to do so, the German-Polish War in September 1939. On September 3, Britain declared war on the German Reich. The Z-Plan and the cancellation of the naval agreement are the results of the same false calculation with which Kaiser Wilhelm II and Admiral Tirpitz before World War I had already acquired the British's antagonism instead of their partnership. The "bloating" of the Kriegsmarine according to the Z-Plan, although gigantic strategically, is meant defensively, even though it would have given the Reich the ability to become offensive in naval warfare if this plan had been completed. Hitler still wants to avoid war against his "desired partner" England in 1939. Admiral Raeder also repeatedly warns Hitler against war with England, still the greatest naval power on the globe at the time. Raeder foresees that the industrial and naval power USA will side with England in a British-German confrontation. He knows that such a war would end in disaster for Germany, and yet he himself sets this trap with his Z-Plan for Germany. On September 1, 1939, at the outbreak of war, Germany's naval buildup has not changed the ranking of the largest fleets since 1933. The Kriegsmarine still ranked seventh in the world by tonnage and by number of ships. All other fleets have grown as well. In total tonnage, England and in number of ships

	USA	GB	USA	F	D
Number of Major Combat Ships on September 1, 1939	69	69	15	15	7
Ship Class	GB	USA	F	D	
Battleship	15	15	7	5	
Aircraft Carrier	7	5	1		
Heavy Cruiser	17	18	7	1	
Light Cruiser	48	18	12	6	
Destroyer	183	214	58	21	
Total per Fleet	270	270	85	33	69

Dreessen, pp. 132 and 144 255 Only in number of submarines has the Kriegsmarine caught up with the Royal Navy. Number of Submarines on September 1, 1939

	SovjU	USA	F	GB	D
Submarines	165	95	77	57	57

With the beginning of the war in September 1939, the fleets of America and Great Britain have not yet reached their maximum strength. After long periods of shipbuilding, rearmament does not begin to have an impact on the British and American navies until 1940 and 1941. Despite all Germany's initial successes at sea, the war of the fleets will be a battle of unequal weapons. Conclusion After the war, the Z-Plan will serve the Nuremberg court of the victors over the vanquished as the main proof of the guilt of the chief of naval command Grand Admiral Raeder and his

successor Grand Admiral Dönitz of having planned a war of aggression and striving for world domination with the great fleet. Besides that Z-Plan, there are official statements and speeches by Admirals General Carls and Boehm to support this evidence and accusation. The latter two admirals write and speak in 1938 and 39 about the need for "Germany to conquer the way to the ocean" and the need to persuade those "hitherto favored by history to move together and clear another place in the sun."

70 71 Both Carls and Boehm are not the Navy leadership. And just as Cunningham, the Chief of Staff of the British Admiralty, does not officially speak for England, the two admirals do not speak for Germany, even though all three probably reflect the opinion of many British and many Germans. Moreover, it is important to perceive the difference between "world domination" and German "equality among world powers." Even if the overall picture of armaments and foreign policy in the German Reich proves Hitler's expansionist intentions into Eastern Europe, the fleet buildup is not an indication of similar ambitions toward overseas and world domination. Hitler already let it be known in his book "Mein Kampf" that he had neither a sense for naval supremacy nor colonies. Hitler's ambition is not directed against England and America, nor toward their overseas possessions. For him, naval armament has only the sense to build up a "flank protection" on the seas for his Eastern European ambitions. This applies both to the time of Germany's attack on its neighbor Poland and later to the blockade war with England, which itself got involved in the war with Po70 Dreessen, page 145 71 Rahn, pages 92 f 256 len. It also applies later to the attempt to intercept the tide of American war goods for the Soviet Union on the North Atlantic. Ideas of helping himself to England's colonial empire come to Hitler only during the war, when he sees a chance to defeat the British. With England's and France's declaration of war on the German Reich on September 3, 1939, Germany's land and air war against Poland suddenly became a naval war on the seas. Where England's fleet reaches, she can land army troops and air forces. It will practice this for the first time in Norway in April 1940, thus forcing Germany to send troops there as well. It will do so repeatedly later in Greece and in North Africa to provide support to the states and colonies attacked by Italy. Here, too, Hitler will, apart from all his own aims, follow the compulsion to move exerted by the naval power England and send German troops to reinforce the unsuccessful Italian confederate. Thus the sea power determines by indirect strategy where the land power will follow. In the long run, the threat to all coasts in Europe from the navies of England and America in World War II will require the presence of German forces from the North Cape to Sicily. Thus, the value to Germany of the Z Plan and the cancellation of the naval treaty is minimal, but the political damage at the outset and during the war is great.

German Fleet Plans and Treaties Time Plan or Treaty Planned Total Tonnage Target Date 1919 Provisions of Versailles 144,000 in perpetuity 1931 1st Shipbuilding Replacement Plan c. 480,000 1942 Oct. 1932 1st Rebuilding Plan c. 480,000 1942 June 1935 Anglo-German Fleet Agreement 420. 000 on increase in perpetuity Nov. 1935 draft shipbuilding replacement plan 475,000 1946 Jan. 1939 Z plan ca. 1,654,000 1948 Sept. 1939 ACTUAL status at start of war 240,300 With its 240,300 tons, the German navy outnumbered the fleets of England and France 8-fold at the start of the war. 257 Germany's fleet armament from 1933 to 39 is a reaction to the threat situation assumed in each case, first to France and then to Britain. Both Britain and Germany always see the fleets of other states as a threat of the first rank to themselves. The British fear for their world empire, the Germans for their lifelines over the sea, the supply of vital goods. Neither the British government nor the German is prepared to see that its own fleet is equal parts protection and threat.

Air Armament 1933 to 1939 1933 At the turn of the year 1932-33, before Hitler is German chancellor, the armament of the many air armies in Europe is still driven by the French-Italian rivalry around the Mediterranean, by France's general fear of Germany, and by England's fear of France's bomber fleet. Aircraft inventories of the air armies at Hitler's inauguration were approximately: United States 3,100 military aircraft France 3,000 Great Britain 1,800 Italy 1,700 Soviet Union 1,700 Poland

700 Czechoslovakia 670 Belgium 350 Germany 70 All data on aircraft numbers mentioned here and below are taken from 13 German, English, American, and Russian books on air armament and from 9 different air journals from 6 nations. The books are listed in the source list, the magazines are not. The figures in the various sources differ considerably in some cases, partly because reserve aircraft, which often make up half of the total, or aircraft in the colonies have been included or not counted. An attempt has been made here to derive probable "approximate" numbers from the various tables. The nations allied with France against Germany are thus outnumbered in military aircraft by a factor of more than 60, the German aircraft still being training aircraft or prototypes. For the Reich government and the Reichswehr leadership, all concerns for their own security in 1932 and 33 still relate to France, which continues to pursue anti-German policies despite the Franco-German treaties, and to Poland, where voices calling for territorial expansion refuse to fall silent. The Belgians and Czechs, who are allied with France, are seen as potential opponents in the second row. Thus, the German push for its own air forces initially refers solely to these neighboring states and to their attack capability. From February 1933, Adolf Hitler set the pace of armaments in the German Reich. The first thing he offers at the disarmament negotiations in Geneva is that Germany would dispense with air forces altogether if all other countries did the same. Such a solution would be attractive to Germany, which was still impoverished. The other countries rejected this proposal by Hitler. Thereafter, the German government tries to legalize by negotiation its secret decision of July 1932 to procure 200 military aircraft. It put forward a proposal in Geneva to grant Germany 500 fighter and reconnaissance aircraft⁷². There is no mention of bombers suitable for a war of aggression in this proposal. The Geneva negotiators rejected the German demand for 500 military aircraft, and they were not prepared to reduce their air forces themselves, as announced at Versailles. Since no concession could be expected from the old victorious powers, the Reich government abandoned its seven years of futile attempts to achieve an arms balance by mutual agreement. In May 1933, the Reich Air Ministry developed the so-called 1000-aircraft program, the plan for the 500 fighter and reconnaissance aircraft called for in Geneva plus an equal number of training and education machines⁷³. On June 5, 1933, Ambassador Nadolny declared for the German Reich in Geneva – as already mentioned – that Germany would rearm from mid-34 if the other countries did not undertake to disarm themselves by then. At the end of June 1933, the two Reich Ministers of Aviation and Defense, Göring and von Blomberg, secretly ordered the creation of an "air fleet" of 600 frontline aircraft by 1935⁷⁴. Including the training and reserve aircraft, this would amount to the aforementioned 1000 aircraft. As early as October 1933, the three

Chiefs of the British Navy, Army and Air Force warned in their joint annual report of the possible rearmament of the German Reich. Among other things, they justify an "Air Force Expansion Plan for 1934," the first of seven more to come by 1939⁷⁵. The warning at such an early date can so far only refer to German demands in Geneva. In October 1933, the delivery of military aircraft for the Reichswehr had not even begun. ⁷² Völker-Luftwaffe, page 27 ⁷³ Völker-Dokumente, vol. 9, page 119 ⁷⁴ MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 476 ⁷⁵ Völker-Luftwaffe page 27 259 Although the German plan falls far short of catching up with the armament level of the Royal Air Force⁷⁶ and still keeps a large distance from the air forces of France, the British begin their arms race as early as 1933, before Germany has really gotten started. Later, they will always point out that it was the Germans who forced them to arm. The English historian Terraine wrote after the war: "In the general opinion of the Luftwaffe High Command, there was no doubt that this rearmament was directed against Germany and against Germany alone. ⁷⁷ But in 1933, people in England were also still thinking of the threat posed by their nearest neighbor on the mainland, they were thinking of France. The English media czar Viscount Rothermere writes in his DAILY MAIL on November 7, 1933: "We need 5,000 war planes if we are not to remain forever at the mercy and disgrace of our neighbors. France could conquer England today

without landing a single soldier on our shores or without fighting a single naval battle." France, the strongest air power in Europe in 1933, is also rearming. In December 33, the French government decides to renew its "1st line aircraft fleet" with 1,010 modern military aircraft by early 1937⁷⁸. In the meantime, while other countries were stirring, there were no signs of new air forces being built up in Germany throughout the year 33. Pilots continue to train in the Soviet Union or in civilian facilities in the Reich. The industry is only just setting up its production facilities for military aircraft, and there is not yet a single air base or squadron in the whole of Germany. It was not until the turn of the year 1933-1934 that the Reichswehr received its first military aircraft from production. At that time, nothing more is known of Hitler abroad than that he demands equal rights for the German Reich among all other states, and that he, like all other chancellors before him, seeks the annulment of the Treaty of Versailles; actually, no reason yet to arm against Germany. 1934 In February 1934, Hitler again offers before the League of Nations that Germany limit its air forces to 50% of France's, and he proposes to dispense with bombers altogether. At the time, France had nearly 2,000 operational aircraft, 1,000 training aircraft, and over 2,000 reserve aircraft in Europe and over 100 in the colonies⁷⁹. Thus Hitler's Ange 76 Luftwaffe of Great Britain ⁷⁷ Terraine, page 25 ⁷⁸ Aviation Minister Cot announces the fulfillment of this plan in the magazine "L'Aero" on February 10, 1937. ⁷⁹ Deutsche Luftwacht, Volume II, pages 14 f 260 offered a German refit of about 1,000 fighter planes or a reduction of France's air force. The government in Paris wants no part of either. Instead, as already mentioned, Foreign Minister Barthou informs the League of Nations in Geneva on April 17, 1934, that France will not participate in disarmament negotiations with immediate effect and will rearm in the future without agreements in the League of Nations as French security demands. France also joins the race. In Germany, which at the time would be in no position with either army or navy forces to protect itself if necessary, there is a growing realization that air power, and especially bombers, would be an effective means of deterring foreign states from carrying out attacks such as Germany has had to endure defenselessly several times in the last 15 years. Unlike fighter planes, bombers are the offensive means of air warfare to threaten the enemy at home. And aircraft – another consideration – can be built as deterrents against the two potential enemies France and Poland more quickly and with considerably less raw materials than battleships for the fleet or heavy artillery and tanks for the army. Thus, the buildup of air forces temporarily takes on special importance for the security of the Reich. The explorations of the Polish government in Paris at the turn of the year 1933-34, mentioned later in this book, as to whether France wanted to participate in a preventive war against the German Reich, show that these considerations of the Reich government at the time were not taken out of the air. The armament planning of this period related to bombers reveals something else. Although four-engine long-range bombers would have been quite feasible in Russia in 1934, the Reich government and the Reichswehr leadership refrained from planning such bombers for the German air force in 1930. There are reasons for this. The first is the high cost of their production, the second reflects the threat situation. No one in Germany, neither Hitler nor the "Reich Commissar for Aviation" General Göring see the need to fight enemies beyond France or Poland. Nor does Hitler at the time appear to have any concrete ambitions to later attack England or wage war against the Soviet Union. Thus, only single- and twin-engine bombers with ranges of up to 500 kilometers penetration are planned and built in Germany. If Hitler's Lebensraum idea had matured so far in 1934, the dictator would not have refrained from building a strategic bomber fleet against the Soviet Union. The additional industrial cost of large bombers would certainly not have been an obstacle for Hitler either. In the spring of 1934, the armament waves in the world hit high all at once. On 26 January 34, Germany concludes a non-aggression pact with Poland. This increases the security of the German Reich, but France's pact system begins to crumble as a result. When the British government then also proposes before 261 to allow the Germans 250,000 soldiers for

the Reichsheer, the development becomes unbearable for the French from their perspective. With the year 1934, England's policy, if one follows British commentaries, changes its attitude toward the powers on the continent. France's relative strength weakens and that of the German Empire grows. From now on, Germany is the number one rival. British military historian Major General Fuller describes it this way: "From the days of the Tudors until 1914, Britain's policy was to maintain the balance of power, that is, to keep the great nations of the Continent separated by rivalry and to exercise itself the balance between them. This Aus-80 equal automatically

determined who could be considered an enemy." 80 In May 1934, but before the next German aircraft construction program is decided, the Defence Requirement Committee⁸¹ in London calls for the establishment of 46 aircraft squadrons. That is 10 still missing from the 1923 "52-squadron plan," 10 more squadrons for the Luftwaffe in mainland England, plus 10 for the RAF overseas plus 16 for the fleet. The demand ends with the statement that actually 25 more squadrons would be needed⁸². In July 34, almost simultaneously with the next German plan, the British Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force issues the first RAF expansion plan, commissioning the construction of the Hurricane, Hawker and Spitfire fighter types⁸³. Thus, British air armament in 1934 is not initially triggered by any discernible German air armament. The trigger is probably a mixture of fear of France's lead and fear of Germany's possibilities. Roosevelt also continues to turn his armaments screw. Japan, at war with China since 1932, is becoming too strong in Asia from his point of view, and Hitler is a thorn in his side anyway. Thus, in July, he initiates the construction program of another 120 ships for the fleet, as described above, and the Ministry of Defense⁸⁴ announces that the Air Force is also to become larger⁸⁵. Outside the states of Western Europe and America, too, the world is in a state of armaments fever. In Italy, Poland and Russia, armament continues. In the Soviet Union, the aeronautics industry is increasing production to churn out an annual shipment of over 3,500 new military aircraft starting in 1935⁸⁶. 50% of these are bombers and strike aircraft. 80 Fuller, page 19 81 Defense Committee 82 Terraine, page 27 83 Terraine, page 27 84 today the Pentagon 85 Rassinier, page 86 86 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 4, page 47 262 The German Reich government, intending to bridge the years of weakness in the reconstruction of the navy and army, relies on the speed buildup of air forces. Thus, in July 1934, an extensive aircraft construction program, still kept secret from foreign countries, was decided upon. In a first step, 4,021 military aircraft were to be procured and delivered to the troops by September 1935, half of them for operational use and half as courier and training aircraft. In subsequent steps up to the end of 1938, a further expansion to a total of 17,015 military aircraft is then planned⁸⁷, of which just under 40% are to be used for operations and the remainder for training and reserves. 1935 The buildup of

air forces in Europe continues in 1935. In March of that year, the War Office in London refers to German rearmament in a White Paper and assesses it as a threat of war. Conversely, from Hitler's political perspective and in the view of the Reichswehr top brass, England at the time is not a potential adversary for the German Reich. From Hitler's point of view, England is rather a potential ally. Simultaneously with the publication of the White Paper in London, Colonel General Beck, the Chief of Staff of the Army, justifies in Berlin the renewed increase of German armament expenditures with the alarming rearmament measures of Germany's neighbors in 1934. This trend among Germany's neighbors prolongs the period in which the growing but still small Reich Army is not sufficient to protect its own country. Thus, the buildup of the German Air Force continues with great vigor in 1935. At the beginning of 1935, the German Reich, in its still secretive formations, has about 1,900 aircraft, 670 of which are for front-line use, still far fewer than the other major states in Europe⁸⁸. But in order to feign the German Reich's ability to defend itself, Reichswehr Minister von Blomberg orders on February 26, 1935, that the hitherto secret buildup of German air forces be "unmasked." On March 1,

he therefore orders the German Air Force to be established as a new, independent and third part of the Wehrmacht, i.e. he makes the build-up officially known to the whole world. Although the victorious powers had already granted Germany equal rights in principle in armaments matters in December 1932, a chain of severe reactions now followed. On March 1, the same day, a bill was submitted to the National Assembly in Paris to double the length of military service to two years⁸⁹. 87 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, p. 483 88 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, pp. 480 and 491 89 Rassinier, p. 91 263 England's parliament, the House of Commons, also passed an extensive program on March 1 for the further rearmament of the army, air force and navy. The British are not only moved by fear of Germany's new strength. They are also concerned about England's colonial ambitions, competition with Japan in the Far East and worries in East Africa. Italian troops have marched up to Ethiopia's borders, and England, as the "protecting power" of the Egyptians, does not want to allow Italy to gain land south of the upper reaches of the Nile. Thus, on March 1, 1935, the House of Commons provides British Prime Minister Baldwin with virtually unlimited funds for further armaments⁹⁰. The Royal Air Force now has the means to create new military airfields on the east coast of England and to expand old ones in the course of its "2nd RAF Expansion Plan." These reactions from Paris and London now trigger new reactions themselves. On March 10, Hitler publicly announces for the first time the plan to strengthen the German peacetime army to 36 divisions. On March 16, the French National Assembly responds with a decision to extend conscription to two years. On the evening of the same day, Hitler's next move comes. He introduces the bill for the introduction of a one-year compulsory military service into the Reichstag. Four weeks later, on April 11, Italy's "Duce" Mussolini announces that he wants the expansion of land, sea and air forces accelerated⁹¹. Armament also continues in the United States, Japan and Russia. On May 21, Hitler announces that universal conscription will be reintroduced in the German Reich. He combines this message with the offer to England to limit the expansion of the Reichsmarine and with the offer to all other states to conclude an agreement on the outlawing of the bomb war and the limitation of the numbers of ships, heavy artillery and tanks⁹². Only England takes up the offer and concludes the already mentioned fleet agreement. Even to the outlawing of the bomb war the addressed states are not ready 1935. Thus, the armament years 1934 and 1935 do not initially bring the desired security for Germany. The general rearmament outside the Reich initially relativized the troops, ships and aircraft newly commissioned in the Reich. The arms surge that has been going on throughout Europe since March 1, 1935, can hardly be explained by Blomberg's directive to build up an air force in Germany and to raise an army of 36 divisions. After all, all neighbors maintain air forces, and after all, they had already granted the German Reich equal rights in armament matters in principle in 1932. Hitler's offer to all to introduce arms ceilings and the pact with England to limit the German fleet, as well as further guarantees to France, 90 Rassinier, page 96 91 Rassinier, page 87 92 Domarus, vol. 1, pages 511-514 264 not to touch its borders any more, should also have had a rather calming effect. All this cannot alone explain the Europe-wide armament up to 1936. France, England, Poland, Italy and the Soviet Union were obviously arming at first more because of the problems they had partly with each other and partly with Japan in the Far East. Only with time does Germany's rearmament come to the fore in this international development for all to see, and then itself becomes the trigger for new arms surges. 1936 In terms of the number of military aircraft, Germany catches up with neighboring countries, while the army and navy are still far from being able to defend their own country. Thus, when Hitler marches German troops into the unprotected Rhineland in March 1936, he knows that the Wehrmacht would be no match for a counterattack by France, and that if that were to happen, German troops would have to give way. Even the new German air force would still be inferior to the French one in March. During 1936, Germany produced about 5,200 aircraft of all types⁹³. Despite these high production figures, the quantity of newly built aircraft for front-line use still remains relatively small. A

small portion is also exported to other countries. Great Britain also continues to upgrade its Air Force. In 1936, orders were placed for the Halifax and Manchester bombers. Construction and purchase orders are placed with the U.S., and more aircraft factories are built in England.⁹⁴ At the end of 1936, everyone in Germany still sees the Luftwaffe as an instrument to keep neighboring countries at a distance until the army is capable of protecting the German Reich. The Wehrmacht as a whole is still outnumbered by the armed forces of its immediate neighbors⁹⁵. Therefore, at the end of 1936, no one in the German Reich, even in the Wehrmacht, suspects that Germany's arms race to catch up in three years could serve to trigger a world war itself. 1937-1938 During 1937, the German Reich begins to overtake every other major state in Europe except the Soviet Union in the number of military aircraft. But to defend the Reich's territory, Germany would still be no match for a coalition of potential adversaries in both East and West. Thus, the arms buildup continues. The Luftwaffe, built to deter opponents and to support the army and fleet if necessary against an attacking France ⁹³ MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 491 ⁹⁴ Terraine, page 17 ⁹⁵ MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 493 265 and its allies, now reaches a size and a quality that itself becomes a threat to its neighbors. In November 1937, Hitler announced to the commanders-in-chief of the

Army, Air Force, and Navy in a debate⁹⁶ that he intended to make use of the Wehrmacht for a purpose for which the gentlemen had not intended the reconstruction of their Wehrmacht units: for the expansion of the German Reich into Austria and Czechoslovakia. Hitler let the Lords know that he expected wars to pursue these objectives in the years 1943-45 or thereabouts. The reaction of the generals to the intention to annex Czechoslovakia is the subject of another section of this book. It should be noted here that Hitler, in the course of the discussion, assesses the possibilities of how neighboring states might react to an annexation of Austria or annexation of Czechoslovakia. He largely ruled out the possibility of intervention by France or England. Nor does he want to believe in interference by Poland, Italy, and the Soviet Union. But the commanders-in-chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht present are not so optimistic. They prefer to take precautions and have their staffs investigate the possibilities of warlike confrontations with England or other states. Thus, from the winter of 1937-38, a war against the aforementioned states, which all but Hitler wanted to avoid at all costs, came into the sights of all those who were working at the time and thereafter on building up the three branches of the Wehrmacht. As a result of this new view that war with England was also conceivable, a bomber with a larger radius of action was included in the aircraft construction program. It reaches as far as the island of England. Long-range bombers, however, which could carry large bomb loads and fly as far as the industrial areas of Russia, were only considered, but never planned or built. That the fears of the Wehrmacht leadership regarding Hitler's plans were not unfounded was soon shown by the reaction of the British House of Commons to the Treaty of Munich. On October 5, 1938, when the members of Parliament approved the annexation of the Sudetenland to the German Reich, they decided at the same session to build 3,000 aircraft for the remainder of '38 and 8,000 for 1939

as well as further reinforcements for the army and the fleet⁹⁷. In the U.S., Roosevelt follows with the decision to increase the U.S. Air Force to a strength of 10,000 military aircraft⁹⁸. The further buildup of the German Air Force is planned for the years 1943 to 1945. As in the naval buildup with the Z-Plan, the claim to own power and ⁹⁶ Hitler's discussion with the commanders-in-chief on November 5, 1937, reproduced in the so-called "Hoßbach Protocol" ⁹⁷ Rassiner, page 214 ⁹⁸ Benoist-Mechin, volume 7, page 15 266 strength overboard at the turn of the year 1938-39. On November 7, 1938, the "concentrated aircraft type program" is enacted, providing for a final expansion of the Luftwaffe with 20,000 aircraft⁹⁹. 1939 But things go faster than Hitler still believes in 1937. In 1939, the rest of Czechoslovakia disintegrates, and Hitler bends the Czechs' right to self-determination and has the rest of Czechoslovakia occupied as a "protectorate". Six months later, World War II begins with the German

attack against Poland. Consequently, the German air force is still not at full strength according to the plans of the time. However, at the beginning of the war on September 1, 1939, it had 4,033 modern frontline aircraft at its disposal against Poland.¹⁰⁰ The air forces of other European countries were also far from completing the process of increasing the number of squadrons, the influx of new military aircraft and the replacement of obsolete aircraft. All countries are continuing to expand their air forces at a rapid pace, although they have not yet begun to upgrade their forces in time for September 1939. In that year, the Soviet Union built more than 10,000 new military aircraft, Germany just over 8,000, England just under 8,000, the U.S. almost 6,000 and Japan almost 4,500. At the outbreak of war, Germany was already the second air power behind Russia, but it was still considerably inferior to its three opponents England, France and Poland together. On September 1, 1939, the European states have the following numbers of so-called frontline aircraft¹⁰²: Soviet Union over 5,000 Germany 4,033 England 3,600 France 2,550 Poland 800. Conclusion The Reichswehr leadership and then later Marshal Göring set up and equipped the German air forces first to defend against the then aggressive Poland, then to defend against a possible attack by France and finally also for a confrontation with France plus England. Up to this point, the ideas of the Wehrmacht leadership coincide with those 99 Völker Dokumente, vol. 8, page 170 ¹⁰⁰ MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, 1st volume, page 496 ¹⁰¹ Overly, page 150 ¹⁰² Baumbach, pages 45 ff 267 of Adolf Hitler. Both the generals and the dictator consider the revision of many of the facts created at Versailles to be their duty and entirely legitimate. By 1937, the revisions must be secured militarily. The basic defensive idea of this armament does not turn until November 1937, when Hitler reveals that he is also striving for the Czech Republic and Austria with the Wehrmacht. Hitler did not express any further thoughts, especially in the direction of Russia and Ukraine, before the war. For the generals, especially for the commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Marshal Göring, the annexation of Austria was legitimate. After all, the Austrians themselves had demanded the annexation of their country to the German Reich several times since 1919. Only in the case of the invasion of the Czech Republic there are differences of opinion. Hitler wants to make the Czech Republic a "protectorate" of the German Reich. The generals are in no way interested in this. Only a dozen army generals try to thwart this intention of Hitler. The air force generals let the dictator act, perhaps also because they can follow his threat analysis of Czechoslovakia as an "aircraft carrier" of the Russians and French more easily than their army comrades. In the eyes of Goering and the generals, the rapid further buildup of the Luftwaffe in 1938 was not specifically aimed at Czechoslovakia, which with its 700 frontline aircraft and 43 army divisions¹⁰³ could only become a danger to Germany in connection with France or Russia anyway. The massive further armament from 1938 rather refers to a later war, which Hitler, as he repeatedly says, considers inevitable if Germany one day demands its former colonies or replacements for them in Eastern Europe. Otherwise, the General lives in historical experience. It knows that French governments have been trying to push France's borders to the Rhine for three centuries. The last example of this was offered by France at Versailles in 1919. She knows that the Soviets are trying to spread communism to the Atlantic and, if they can, their rule. She knows that England has been waging wars against the strongest state in Europe for a couple of centuries. Thus the reason for further arming for Marshal Goering and the generals lies in a very diffuse mixture of the need for protection of their own people and preparation for a later war for new land. But such a later war of aggression is not prepared for until 1939, neither in the operational plans of the general staffs, nor in the planning exercises of the troops, nor in any armament necessary for it. Thus, the German Air Force lacks the capability to wage a strategic bomber war against a distant country. It lacks the heavy bomber fleet. The other major powers, in terms of their armies, fleets, and air forces, are well equipped against Germany in 1933. So well, in fact, that some of them can invade Germany with impunity in ¹⁰³ Goerlitz, Page 33 268 the 1920s, and so well, too, that Poland and France are considering "punitive

expeditions" against the German Reich from 1933 to 1936. England, the USA, Japan and the Soviet Union produce already in 1932 and before annually hundreds of military airplanes¹⁰⁴, instead of –as announced in Versailles disarmament. The arms race was not started by the German Reich. It joined this race in 1934, then caught up with an industrial effort by 1936 and overtook it in 1937. From 1940 onward, it was again England, America and Russia that outstripped Germany in aircraft armament. So the question is open as to who threatened whom here. It seems that every major power in Europe at some point considered attacking another, and be it preemptively. England and the United States ramped up their fleets and air forces before the new German air force became visible to foreign countries, and before the governments of either country could learn anything of Hitler's Lebensraum idea. Germany's three chances in 1933 and 1934 to negotiate and limit aircraft numbers have been turned down by the victorious powers. France, in particular, rejecting the offer in 1934 to limit Germany's military aircraft to 50% of France's, missed the opportunity to involve Hitler at a time when his megalomania was not yet growing on the manure of his later successes. If France's fear and megalomania had been somewhat less, the German air force could have been limited for a few years with the "air fleet agreement" offered by Hitler, just as the German fleet armament was limited in 1935. The Army Armament 1933 to 1939 To continue the prehistory, it should be mentioned that in October 1932, after six fruitless years of negotiations, Reich Chancellor von Papen decided to increase the size of the Reichswehr if necessary without agreement with the victorious powers, that in November 32 the 2nd Reichswehr Armament Plan was published. In December 32, the victorious powers in the League of Nations decide to grant the German Reich equal rights in principle in armaments matters. Shortly thereafter, Adolf Hitler and Franklin Delano Roosevelt step into the limelight of world history, two politicians who are alike in two respects:

both must eliminate the high unemployment in their countries, and both are willing to enforce their foreign policy ideas with wars if necessary. Both have a penchant for weapons. Both politicians begin to rearm their countries immediately after taking office: Adolf Hitler land power-oriented with priority for the German army, and Roosevelt, as already mentioned, sea power-oriented for the American navy. ¹⁰⁴ Overy, pages 21f 269 An event that reminds everyone in Germany of the earlier invasions of the German Reich by the victorious powers occurs during this same period. On March 6, 1933, Poland lands a battalion of Marines in the Free State of Danzig¹⁰⁵. The League of Nations forces Poland to withdraw the troops after ten days. But what remains of this in Germany is the impression that Poland is still looking for opportunities to expand its territory westward. Conversely, the feeling has not been extinguished in Germany that territories which until 1919 had been populated almost exclusively by Germans and which had been granted to Poland without a referendum should be "taken back" when the opportunity arises. In 1925, the Reich Foreign Minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Stresemann expressed this sentiment several times in writing and in speeches, saying that one of the great tasks of German foreign policy was to correct the Reich's eastern borders. Thus, in the spring of 1933, although the Reichswehr leadership is in reality still far from thinking about an attack against Poland, the wound that Germany has on Poland's border is reopened with the Danzig incident. It is almost as if Poland is the cue for the Reichswehr leadership. 1933 The security situation in which Germany finds itself in the spring of 1933 is such that the Reichswehr faces

challenges similar to the Polish landing at Danzig on the Westerplatte could not respond if they happened on German territory and if the many military alliances France has made against the German Reich were used against Germany in the process. France has, since 1920, woven a network of alliances with Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia that explicitly involve military action against the German Reich. Moreover, the Reichswehr has had no trained reservists available since 1931, and new reserves are hardly being formed by the professional army. With only 100,000 army soldiers and a maximum of

150,000 state police, Germany could not guarantee the security of its own territory itself in the spring of 1933. In the event of war, however, France, including the reserves, would have 4.5 million soldiers at its disposal, Belgium 0.6 million, Poland 3.2 and Czechoslovakia 1.3 million. This would give, including the German national police, an inferiority of almost 1:40 in case Germany had to defend herself. This is the background against which Hitler in 1933 is able to stage an unparalleled rearmament in a few years without it first becoming recognizable at home as preparations for a war of aggression. In March 1933, at the disarmament negotiations in Geneva, the British Prime Minister Mac Donald proposes 200,000 army soldiers for Germany and 400,000 for France, half for the mother country and half for the colonies. France rejects this and does not want to accept the 105 Großer Ploetz, Page 948 270 equal rights granted to Germany the previous year. Hitler then threatened, as already mentioned, that Germany would leave the League of Nations if the promised equality continued to be refused. When nothing moved in this respect, Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and the German delegation left the disarmament negotiations in Geneva. Still in October 33, Hitler orders planning preparations for the eventual introduction of universal conscription and the expansion of the army to 21 divisions. By the end of 1933, the army of the Reichswehr had a strength of 122,000 men¹⁰⁶. The reorganization of artillery, antiaircraft, and telecommunications units also began. In view of the intransigence of the French, who have so far shown no inclination to release a large part of their nearly 700,000 army soldiers, Hitler now demands 300,000 men for Germany in bilateral negotiations with the British and French. In December 1933, the Reich Ministry of the Armed Forces accordingly draws up a directive for the further expansion of the peacetime army to 300,000 soldiers, the so-called December Plan¹⁰⁷. What is remarkable about this plan is the self-perception of the Reichswehr leadership. A memorandum on which the plan is based states that the war army to be mobilized from the peacetime army should be able to fight a defensive war after several fronts with some prospect of success. There is no mention of "living space in the East" or "revision of the borders". 1934 At the beginning of 1934, there is yet another attempt by the Germans and the French to converge in terms of their army strengths. On December 18, 1933, Hitler had proposed 300,000 soldiers for the Reichsheer and had accepted the change from a professional army to a short-service army suggested in the Mac Donald Plan of March. On January 1, 1934, the French government rejected the army strength of 300,000 for Germany, proposing instead that both countries first convert their armies to short service, and that only then should the armament and strengths of the Reich Army and the French Home Army be equalized. Since the dismantling of the professional army would take many years, since the Reichsheer would not be allowed tanks, aircraft, submarines, and other previously prohibited weapons during this period, and since France does not want its colonial army included in this proposal, the Reichsregierung declines. After eight years of fruitless haggling, it does not want to be stalled for another six years. That is how long it would take to convert from a professional army to an army with a short service period. Even a new offer from the German side to cap the planned air force at 50% of the strength of the French could not persuade Paris to give in on the army strength issue¹⁰⁸. 106 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, p. 405 107 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK vol. 1, p. 408 108 German offer of limitation of February 21, 1934 271 On March 22, 1934, the Reich government publishes its new budget and thus reveals that Germany is now arming even without agreement with the French government, albeit still in moderation. The reaction from France was not long in coming. Foreign Minister Barthou declares – as already mentioned – that France will stop negotiating, that it will henceforth base its security on its own strength. The last chance is lost. In 1934, the military build-up in Europe continues in terms of quantity and quality of troops and weapons. France, despite the German guarantee of Locarno, continues to build its gigantic fortifications, the so-called Maginot Line, since 1930. Otherwise, the army remains at a strength of 700,000 soldiers. In England, too, the motorization of the land forces has been underway since 1930, and from 1931 the

buildup of an armored force. The bulk of the defense budget, however, goes to the British navy and to the armament of the air force. Poland concludes the non-aggression pact with Germany in January 1934, but in the same year, probably because of Russia, it supplements conscription with an auxiliary military service for women and thus strengthens the reserves. The Soviet Union expands its land forces from 600,000 men to 940,000 in 1934¹⁰⁹ and establishes 10 armored brigades and three paratrooper divisions. Meanwhile, in Germany, the army reaches a strength of 240,000 men by October, and the planned 21 infantry divisions grow rapidly¹¹⁰. 1935 The year 1935 brings another arms surge, the causes of which are difficult to pin down to a single event. The turn of the year is preceded by attacks by Ethiopians against Italians on the border with Italian Somaliland, whereupon the Italian government deploys an army corps against Ethiopia in February 1935. On April 11, it announces in *POPULO D'ITALIA* that the Italian army will be increased to 600,000 men. As a result, the British see their protectorate of Egypt in danger. And they fear that the Italian-British agreements on the delimitation of their spheres of interest in Ethiopia will not be respected. Furthermore, England feels affected by Japan's activities in Manchuria. England was no less disturbed by the obvious rearmament in the German Reich. As a consequence, Prime Minister Baldwin submitted an extensive rearmament program for the three branches of the armed forces to the government in London on March 1, 1935. As already mentioned, from this time on, the British justified their own rearmament with that of Germany. Conversely, Germany's rearmament was justified by the alarming arms buildup abroad. ¹⁰⁹ Rassinier, page 87 ¹¹⁰ Hermann, page 422 ²⁷² On January 1, 1935, Czechoslovakia extended universal conscription to two years, thus strengthening its army. This is followed by the French. On January 13, the referendum in the Saar brings an overwhelming result for the reannexation of the Saar region to Germany. The National Assembly in Paris fears the increase in German power and, as soon as the Saar region is returned, decides to extend universal conscription to two years. As a result, France's army is automatically reinforced by over a hundred thousand men as of 1936. At the end of January, the Soviet armed forces exceed the number of one million soldiers in their build-up. This is followed on March 1 by the British rearmament program just mentioned. Now comes the next German step. Hitler takes advantage of the debate in the French National Assembly on the extension of conscription to abandon the hitherto practiced secrecy about German rearmament from abroad. Following a cabinet decision on March 15, he announces the following day that Germany will raise a peacetime army of 36 divisions, build up an air force, and reintroduce universal conscription. The reason he gave was the refusal of the victorious powers to honor their promises under the Treaty of Versailles, to disarm themselves, and instead to rearm, as in the case of the other states. The warnings of General von Blomberg, the Reich Minister of War, and General von Fritsch, the Chief of Army Staff, against this step are revealing in this context. Both advised against a hasty buildup of the army and warned that rapid armament could tempt the victorious powers into a pre-emptive war. But England and France left it at that with protests. After only three more months, England de facto recognizes the legitimacy of German rearmament when it goes over to business as usual and concludes the agreement with Germany to limit the German fleet. Thus it is announced before all the public that Germany will bring its army to a strength of 36 divisions in the next few years. France, for comparison, has 46 divisions and several hundred unassigned smaller formations, England has 20 divisions including its cavalry brigades, Poland has 35 including cavalry, Czechoslovakia also has 35, and the Soviet Union is close to reaching its Plan goal of 116 divisions¹¹¹. On May 31, 1935, the German Imperial Government, referring to the Anglo-German naval agreement, once again offers to foreign countries "to make such limitations in their armaments as will likewise be adopted by other states." No state responds to the proposal and all continue to arm. For the public in the German Reich, the often repeated *Abrü* ¹¹¹ Ploetz, *Zweiter Weltkrieg*, pages 383, 443, 337, 492 ²⁷³ stungs offers of their own government on the basis of equality

of all states and the proposals to abolish certain weapons in all states are convincing. The armament of up to 36 divisions and one year of compulsory military service are within the bounds of what the German citizen can understand as necessary for defense. All the more so since the announcement of the corresponding Hitler declaration on the 36 divisions and on general conscription contains the reassuring and deceptive sentence: "In this hour the German Government renews before the German people and before the whole world the assurance of its determination ... in the German national armament no instrument of warlike attack but rather exclusively of defense and thus of the maintenance of peace."

112 In October 1935, the first conscripts are called up in Germany and 56,000 police officers are transferred from the state police forces to the Reichswehr. Thus, from the spring to the beginning of the fall, the number of army soldiers increases from 280,000 to 400,000 soldiers and the number of divisions from 21 to 29. In Russia, meanwhile, the army strength rises to 1.3 million men. Germany would not be able to protect itself against an attack by France in a case like 1923, even after the deployment of the 36 planned peace divisions. In contrast to the German Reich, France had trained and equipped reserves in 1935 and could deploy about 100 divisions in the event of a war¹¹³. Depending on the inclusion of the Russians, Czechs or Poles allied with France against Germany, the French can count on another 50 to 200 Allied divisions. In addition, according to the will of France, the German Rhineland border is still to be kept free of German troops and thus unprotected. Thus, 36 German peacetime divisions against, at worst, 300 on the French side can only be an intermediate figure. Since Hitler's offers to limit army forces will not catch on in 1935, it is foreseeable that after the 36 active divisions now planned, the dictator and the army command will both raise more active ones and, like many other countries, create the same number of reserve divisions once again. Generaloberst Beck, the Army Chief of Staff, refers to the figure of 72 infantry divisions as the quantity of Army units with which Germany would be able to fight a multi-front war with some prospect of success. The figure reappears in later planning. 1936 The year 1936 is one of further, if moderate, intensification. In March, Germany moves troops into the previously demilitarized German border area on both sides of the Rhine. This is justified, but it outrages the neighbor France ¹¹² Völkischer Beobachter, special issue of March 16, 1935. See Domarus 1st volume, page 495 ¹¹³ General Gamelin, at a cabinet meeting in 1939, even speaks of 120 French Divisions. See Bonnet, page 266 274 rich. In July, the civil war begins in Spain. In England, the General Staff of the British Empire begins to raise army troops in the colonies. It thus creates strategic reserves for England. In France, compulsory military service of two years' duration, decided in 1935, begins. In August, Germany follows suit and also extends it to two years. In September, France granted Poland extensive loans to modernize the Polish army's arsenal. And in the Soviet Union, the peacetime army exceeds 1.5 million men¹¹⁴. In Germany, army planning is once again increased under the impression of the new tensions with France. In the spring of 1936, the General Staff of the Army in Berlin increased the number of divisions for the fall of 1936 from the previous 36 to 40, i.e. 36 infantry divisions, 3 armored and 1 mountain division plus 1 cavalry brigade. Peacetime personnel strength for these is 793,410 soldiers. To those 40 peacetime divisions are now added the reserves for a "war army." With each cohort that completes its compulsory military service from 1935, the personnel strength grows by about 500,000 reservists or 8 reserve divisions¹¹⁵ per year from 1937. Reservists from World War I are still earmarked for security units. With this personnel, it should be possible from 1940 to mobilize a war army of 72 infantry divisions, 3 armored, 3 light motorized, and 21 security divisions plus 2 mountain and one cavalry brigade¹¹⁶. The technical literature usually totals this as 102 "division equivalents." The enormous scale of planning for 1940 seems daunting. But with the increase of the German army to 2.5 million active soldiers and reservists envisaged here, the Reich must orient itself to the 5.5 million active and reserve soldiers that France's army has at its disposal in the same period¹¹⁷. In addition, 1.5 million Czechs and Slovaks, 1.5 million Poles and more than 5 million Soviet soldiers must be considered for the

event of war on two sides. In 1936, Reich War Minister Field Marshal von Blomberg, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Fritsch, and his Chief of Staff, General Beck, are of the opinion that their planned 102-division army serves solely to secure the territory and sovereignty of the German Reich. By the end of 1936, the army had grown to 40 active divisions plus one cavalry brigade and the cadres of 4 reserve and 21 securing divisions 114 Ploetz, *Zweiter Weltkrieg*, page 447 115 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 443 116 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 432 117 Ploetz 2. WK, page 386 275118. The buildup of additional reserve cadres by 1940 is planned. Thus, within a few years, the too-short dagger of the Reichswehr has become a bare sword. Even if the German army is still inferior to the French at this time in terms of the number of divisions, tanks and reservists, it is now itself becoming a potential danger to all neighboring states. In addition, since 1936 the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of Staff of the Army have taken the view that if Germany were attacked from two sides, it should carry the war, if necessary, by counterattacking the aggressor's territory in order to protect its own border areas from devastation. In military parlance, this is referred to as "offensively conducted strategic defense." Thus, from the end of '36, the army, which was to serve solely to protect the German Reich, became capable of attacking even individual other states. The fact that Adolf Hitler, with this instrument of the planned 102 active and mobilized divisions, opens a war three years later, which already becomes a world war after only three days, will only become clear to Blomberg, Fritsch and Beck with time. The first of them to recognize the danger concretely was Beck in 1937. 1937-1939 In the years 1937 to 1939, the peace army, initially planned with 43 divisions, grows to 51 divisions due to the annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland. At the same time, cadres of the 51 reserve, Landwehr, and security divisions planned for the event of war are raised. The annexation of Austria in March 1938 brings 6 active divisions from the Bundesheer into the planned 102 large units¹¹⁹. The transfer of the Sudetenland with 3 million Germans into the territory of the Reich in October 38 makes it possible to raise two more active army divisions. The annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia in April 1939, in violation of international law, further strengthens the army's arsenal with weapons, ammunition and armaments. From the dissolved Czech Army, the German Army takes over equipment reserves for 15 infantry divisions and the equipment for 3 active Wehrmacht armored divisions¹²⁰. But this gain comes at a high price. The annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia destroys the last bit of trust that people in England still have in Hitler. Thus, the gain is countered by the fact that from now on, Great Britain also prepares for a land war against Germany. After the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, general conscription was reintroduced in England. Already at the conclusion of the Munich Agreement six months earlier, the British Army had begun to raise 19 new divisions¹²¹. Otherwise, England can save on its own army forces, because in the event of war, the troops of the Dominions are also available to it, as France has its troops from the 118 Hermann, page 435 119 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 443 120 MGFA, DR u. 2. WK, vol. 1, page 444 121 Rassinier, page 214 276 colonies. Thus, soon after the war began, Army divisions from Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa would be fighting on England's side. Conclusion The rapid buildup of the 102-division Army can be divided into two phases. First, by 1936, under the enormous armament advantage of all neighboring countries and under the impression of the threat aroused in the German people by the Franco-Belgian-Polish-Czech encirclement, an active army of 40 divisions is formed, capable of protecting the Reich with some prospect of success. From 1937, in the three years leading up to the war, the active army is augmented only by 5 more German and Sudeten German

as well as the mentioned 6 Austrian divisions. However, almost unnoticed by the German public, an equally large reserve army with 51 Landwehr, security, replacement and reserve infantry divisions¹²² is created. With a force of 51 active divisions and 51 more when they are fully equipped and mobilized,

Germany has acquired an offensive capability that no neighboring country except France can resist. In Germany, it is not until Hitler's speech in November 1937, already quoted, that the top generals realize that the dictator is striving on his own initiative to wage war in the East for land acquisitions from about 1943. On this occasion, however, Hitler speaks only of Austria and the Czech Republic. The population, the officer corps and the mass of soldiers remained unaware of this until the war was over. The illusion of the government's will for peace is fed in Germany by a variety of "information" and sentiments. These include the "Führer's" frequent assurances of peace and his initial reticence about Poland's sky-scraping minority policy. They include just as much the respect for the military power of France and the terrible memories of the First World War, just 20 years past. It certainly includes the secrecy surrounding the rapidly growing reserve army. And last but not least, there is the satisfaction about the now rising prosperity in one's own country. The population was not willing to put this at risk by starting a new war. In 1938, however, the army of the Wehrmacht becomes ambivalent as a protection for Germany and as a danger for foreign states. It can serve both purposes, depending on the foreign policy of the Reich government. From here on, custom and abuse are possible. The army leadership thinks of the protection of the Reich and hopes that the dictator will not cross the "Rubicon" ¹²³ despite his hints. It still considers the 102 divisions reached in 1938-39 adequate in view of the army strengths of the neighboring states. Already in 1925, when the neighbors ^{lan 122 Herrmann, page 435} ^{123 Crossing the Rubico River, Caesar, coming from Gaul in 49 B.C., breaks into Italy with his troops to take over the rule in Rome. 277} ^{ge were not so highly equipped, the Office of the Troops had considered the number of 104 divisions necessary for the safe protection of the Empire. In 1939, the conflict between Germany on the one hand and Poland, England, and France on the other was drifting toward disaster. At the beginning of the war, about 100 German active and reserve divisions were opposed by about 100 French, 47 Polish and 20 English. The Soviet Union, now with about 220 divisions, leaves the camp of the British, Poles and French a week before the war breaks out. German Army Plans to 1938 Years and Titles of Plans Divisions + Brigades Planning Horizon in Peace Total for War 1928 Oct. 1st Armament Plan 10 16 1932 1930 April Tasks of the Wehrmacht 10 21 1938 1932 Dec. December Plan 21 63 1938 1935 March Denkschrift Truppenamt 36 69 1938 1936 June 43 + 1 99 + 3 1941 1938 50 + 1 99 + 3 1943} Guilt and complicity The international arms race beginning in 33 and leading to Germany's victory in Poland in 1939 seems, from the point of view of the outcome, to have served for the Germans only the goal of waging a war of conquest and for the enemy Allies only the goal of preventing it. But the beginning of the rapid rearmament after the First World War lies outside the German sphere. It is found in the armament of the Americans, British, Soviets, and Japanese, and in the lead the French seek to maintain with their army, air forces, and fleet on the Continent and in the western Mediterranean. The powers mentioned do not follow their obligation under the Treaty of Versailles to disarm themselves. They break the treaty before the German Reich withdraws from it. They themselves open the gates through which later Germany, for its part, evades the arms limitations of the treaty. ²⁷⁸ The United States is not threatened by any other state after the First World War. They rearm their fleet at a pace that even in 1933 and 1934 cannot be justified by Hitler's foreign policy. Roosevelt is obviously concerned first of all with jobs and the expansion of power in the Pacific. The U.S. government needs employment for over 12 million unemployed people in 1933. The second reason is Japan's competition and influence on the markets in East Asia. That the president, as he later pretends, is concerned with the protection of democracy and human rights in the world cannot be assumed in view of the racial discrimination of blacks and Indians practiced in his own country and in view of the later alliance with the inhuman dictatorship in Russia. President Roosevelt is obviously already determined in 1933 to enforce the power of the USA with war and weapons, if and where this should become necessary. England, too, is rearming its naval and air forces at the beginning of the 1930s, before the government

changes in Germany. At that time, the British can only fear the French bomber fleet and the Japanese claim to dominance in the Western and South Pacific. Neither Germany nor Italy had entered the picture by then. The demand of the chiefs of the services for further armaments as early as the end of 1933 cannot be justified either by an already visible German rearmament or by German territorial claims. The origin of their fear of Germany is probably more the dim suspicion that the German Reich might one day, not so distant, again become the strongest power on the mainland, and that it would then reclaim England's colonial spoils of 1919. The British, however, are determined not to cede their foreign domination of Hong Kong, Singapore, and the South Pacific archipelagos to Japan and not to tolerate any new German competition. Thus, they continue their already ongoing rearmament from 1933 with a changed justification and intensify it from 1935. The British are prepared to wage war for their rule in the colonies and against a new first mainland power in Europe if necessary. Their mother country is not threatened. France's armaments between the two wars are mainly indirect and defensive. Its concerns are for Germany and Italy. The Italians claim territories in Savoy, the Mediterranean, and North Africa. The Germans demand nothing from France until 1940 except their equal rights. But even that, from the French perspective, is incompatible with the security of their own country. In France, it is almost inconceivable that the Germans will permanently refrain from bringing back the German-speaking Alsatians and the Lorraines, insofar as they too are, with a new war. Thus, fear of Germany is a piece of the foundation of France's foreign, security, and armament policy; and this despite all declarations of renunciation from Stresemann to Hitler. 279 Thus, the French are arming for conservation. The construction of the fleet was primarily for security against neighboring Italy, the construction of the Maginot Line for protection against an attack by Germany. But this should be remembered the construction of the Maginot fortification begins already in 1930, when France has 45 peace divisions and Germany 10. The indirect armament of the French consists in providing Poland and Czechoslovakia with credits and advisers for the armament of their armies in Germany's back and in torpedoing Germany's equality as long as this goes. The rearmament of the Soviet Union begins about 1930, and the leaders have a number of reasons for this. The first lies in the experience of the last 13 years. In 1918, American, British, French and Japanese troops intervened in the Russian Civil War. Americans, British and French conquer Murmansk, then Arkhangelsk in 1918, wage an undeclared war to "recover earlier deliveries of munitions and supplies to tsarist Russia" 124 and leave the Soviet Union only after almost two years. In Siberia, it is Americans and Japanese who are involved in the civil war there between 1917 and 1922. The defeat of big Russia by small Poland in 1919 and 1920 has not yet been forgotten. Thus, as a country with long borders and vast distances, the Soviet Union needs a correspondingly large military force. The second reason is Russia's Bolshevism. The ideology of the Soviets is itself expansive and attractive to many people in Europe, America and Asia. It is thus, on the one hand, a creeping danger to foreign states and, on the other, the target of suspicion by the democracies of America and England and the distrust of Nazi Germany. Thus the Soviet government must fear that England, America and Germany will want to protect themselves, Europe and the world from their Bolshevism and will one day invade it for that purpose. The same fate had already befallen revolutionary France in 1791, when Habsburg, Prussia and Piedmont allied to restore the monarchy in France. Thus, in 1930, Russia hastily rearmed its land and air forces and, since 1936, its fleet as well. The fact that the Soviet Union's armed forces were not only there to protect the country and communism only became apparent to foreign countries when Russian troops invaded Poland in 1939, Finland shortly thereafter, and Germany in 1941. In Germany, the real reconstruction of a Wehrmacht does not begin until 1933. The governments of the German Reich up to 1932 are, as far as their own military, strive to regain full military sovereignty in their own country and to rebuild the 124 Dupuy

and Dupuy, Page 1000 280 ability to protect themselves militarily. The generals of the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht naturally see their first task as contributing to the two objectives to the best of their ability. They rebuild the army, air force and navy for the protection of the Reich, first secretly, then still in disguise, and from 1935 openly. The breach of the Treaty of Versailles and the associated violations of the Reich Law with the same text do not bother the Reich Government and the Reich Army leadership. Too often for that, the victorious states had previously reneged and broken the promises in the Wilson notes and the Versailles treaty text itself. The network of military treaties with which France pinned down the German Reich from 1920 onward refreshed the two-front thinking of the military in Germany. Even the Locarno Treaty, with Germany's guarantee of France's borders and the renunciation of the formerly German Alsace-Lorraine, was unable to break the tightly woven network created by France. Thus, the Reichswehr and the Wehrmacht leadership base their buildup goals for land, air and naval forces on France's strengths. The Reichsmarine was to keep its distance from the British, whom Hitler saw as potential partners rather than adversaries until 1937-38. Only in 1938, when a partnership with England is not to be had and London makes it clear that it would side with France in a war of the future as it did in 1914, is planning for the German navy also adapted to the requirements of a war with England. From November 1937, Germany's top generals can know that Hitler does not want to use this large force solely to protect the Reich. He is talking here about the annexation of Austria and the annexation of the Czech Republic. The warnings and contradictions of the top generals since this conference with Hitler do not absolve them of their share of responsibility for the later abuses that Hitler ultimately commits with the Wehrmacht. The ground for all this was prepared by others. The victorious powers of the First World War created conditions for the defeated German Reich - perhaps without intending the result to be so - that are very similar to a dead end. They failed to replace the Versailles Treaty, which the Germans perceived as a treaty of revenge and atonement, with a peace order acceptable to Germany in the long term. They misused the League of Nations to cement Germany's inability to defend itself, instead of using it as a forum for general disarmament in Europe. Through their own armaments, which were inappropriately high for peacetime, they increased the Germans' need for correspondingly strong forces. The victorious powers from the First World War did not respond to Hitler's initial offers to conclude arms limitation agreements, and thus recklessly turned down all chances of moderating the pace of armament in the German Reich. The Anglo-German 281 Fleet Agreement proposed by Hitler shows that it would have been possible to act successfully in a different way. The rearmament of the Wehrmacht, which was pursued from 1932 onward and overdone from 1938 onward, would hardly have become a reality without this foreign environment. After all, between February 1932 and May 1935, the German government made six offers to the victorious powers to renounce jointly and by agreement offensive weapons, to outlaw the bombing war, to abolish air forces, to fix the number of ships, tanks, and heavy artillery, and to limit the German air force to 50% of the French and the German fleet to 35% of the British. Although one may doubt that Hitler would later have honored his offers and treaties to that effect, the whole process shows that the victorious powers had not the slightest interest in limiting their own armaments at a time when Germany gave them no reason for "counterarmament." Even in the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, only Germany put shackles on itself. England was allowed to arm as it wished. 282 PART 4 HITLER'S WAR ANNOUNCEMENTS UNTIL 1939 Hitler's War Announcements Until 1939 The Deceptive Key to Hitler's "Long-Term Plan" Hitler's Book "Mein Kampf The Revelatory Value of Hitler's Speeches Hitler's Assurances of Peace The Overheard Warning Signals and Hitler's Inaugural Speech to Generals on February 3. February 1933 Hitler's secret speeches and key documents Hitler's speech of November 5, 1937, and the Hoßbach Protocol Hitler's new tone toward foreign countries Hitler's speech to commanders on February 10, 1939. February 1939 Hitler's Speech of 23 May 1939 and the

Schmundt Minutes Hitler's Speech of 22 August 1939 and the Seven Protocols Mitwissenschaft und Mitschuld des deutschen Volkes 283 284 HITLER'S WAR ANNOUNCEMENTS UNTIL 1939 In addition to the rearmament of the Wehrmacht, evidence of the German people's and military's complicity and guilt in the preparation and initiation of World War II in 1939 would also have to emerge from Hitler's many speeches. In hundreds of interviews and speeches, the dictator promotes his worldview and the policies he pursues. Until the war, Hitler strives to gain the approval of the German population for everything he does. But whoever reads Hitler's writings, interviews and speeches today will have a startling experience. He discovers the two sides of one and the same politician. He will find the one who publicly talks only of peace all these years, and the one who in closed circles and secret speeches shows very well that he is ready to risk wars and even to start wars himself. The deceptive key to Hitler's "long-term plan" Hitler's speeches could provide answers to two questions. The first is that of what Hitler really wanted. What is of particular importance here is when which plans matured in him. It may well be that there are differences between ripe and ready to speak. The latter, when Hitler considered what to be ripe, leads directly to the second question: When did the German public in general and when did the Wehrmacht in particular learn what the true intentions of the "Führer" were. The prevailing view of German contemporary historians is that Hitler conceived his plans as a coherent body of thought long before he seized power in 1933, and that he waged the entire world war according to a "long-term plan" drafted early on. Many facts speak against this. Hitler's speeches, however, often give the impression that this was the case. There are probably two reasons for this. On the one hand, Hitler himself likes to interpret what happened in retrospect as the fulfillment of his previous will and as an intention he had always had. On the other hand, the course of the war gives some of Hitler's early statements and some of his speeches the meaning that can be ascribed to them from today's perspective. Anyone who reads Hitler's book *Mein Kampf* and his speeches chronologically will notice that the dictator, not unlike what one would expect, repeatedly adapts his views to the changing world events of the time. Thus, over the years, his likes and dislikes for and against our 285 neighboring countries also change. Thus, England, France, the Soviet Union and Poland alternately rise and fall in his favor and hatred. This also puts into perspective the opinion often heard today that one could have seen through everything, as it came, from the beginning. Furthermore, Hitler moved over long phases of his time in a world of imagination that can be described as nebulous or visionary. Postwar historiography usually interprets this nebulousness or these visions from the point of departure of the events. It thereby "establishes" what Hitler meant and announced with this or that phrase. But what seems plausible from the end of the event is not necessarily correct in every case. Hitler could have put his often nebulous ideas into practice in a completely different way in the course of later events. This realization is very important if one dares to draw the conclusion from knowledge of the evil end of 1945 that the readers or listeners of Hitler's writings or speeches should have seen years before where things were drifting. When Hitler annexes Austria to the German Reich in 1938, it is Dr. Schuschnigg's coup d'état with the incorrect "surprise referendum" that triggers the German invasion, not long-term planning by the dictator. Before the attack against Poland in 1939, Hitler speaks several times to the generals that he does not expect a new war until 1943/44. After the invasion of German troops into the neighboring country, he then does not know what to do with the conquered Poland. The army liaison officer von Vormann in the "Führerbegleitkommando" describes Hitler's perplexity in this question at a time when Poland is already almost completely in German hands¹. This does not suggest that Hitler ever had Poland on his agenda as a territorial expansion in a long-term plan. Similarly, the wars against Britain and France as early as 1940 are anything but Hitler's intention or planning. Similarly, Hitler owes the expansion of the war into Norway in the far north and into the Balkans and Libya in the deep south more to the strategies of the British and Italians than to any plan of his own. Even if Hitler did develop a long-term

plan, the war did not proceed according to it. This leaves two questions unanswered.

The first is whether the "Führer" opened his strategy to the German citizens and the German military. The second is whether the German citizens and soldiers should have seen the catastrophe of the 1939–1945 war coming before the war against Poland began. 1 v. Vormann, page 14 286 Hitler's book "Mein Kampf" The first

back references of Hitler's interpretation always fall back on his book "Mein Kampf". There, the 34-year-old Hitler describes his world view and program as he sees it in 1924. The book reflects many of Germany's problems at that turbulent time. It is anti-Semitic and in parts aggressive. But from about 1930 Hitler himself explains that he put this book on paper under the very concrete circumstances of the early 1920s. In 1923, Germany is hit by a total demonetization, and in 1921 and 1923, in the midst of a peace that is obviously not one, French and Belgian troops occupy first Frankfurt, then Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort, and then the entire Ruhr area. From 1930 on, as Hitler gains weight in politics, he asserts several times in his letters and speeches that his book *Mein Kampf* was written under the overwhelming impression of those events, and that he now no longer wants any confrontations with France. The temptation to believe this must be given as much credit to the Germans in 1933 as one gives oneself today for relying on the late moderation and maturity of politicians who had formerly been radical. Theodor Heuss, the first postwar German president, wrote the book "Hitler's Way" in 1931. In 1968, this Heuss book on Hitler was republished with a foreword by the historian Prof. Jäckel. He writes: "Since September 1930, Hitler was not only more moderate in tone. He also spoke differently in substance. A government takeover or even participation seemed to be within the realm of possibility, and from one day to the next Hitler's speeches disappeared, especially the war and conquest plans...."

Who would take "Mein Kampf" and the earlier speeches literally after Hitler himself disavowed it? Not to mention that it seemed too insane to be taken seriously 2 before." 2 Shortly after Hitler's inauguration, the German ambassador in Oslo, Ernst von Weizsäcker, puts the same thought about "Mein Kampf" on paper in a letter to Germany: "One does not learn from books after all. I have now read Hitler's somewhat outdated book "Mein Kampf". What impresses me most at the beginning is the warm-heartedness toward social misery. This is not a reactionary! Unserein must support the new era. For what would come after it if it failed. Of course, we must also stand by it with experience, 3 knowledge of foreign countries and general wisdom." 3 Thus Hitler does not give the German listener or reader the impression in 1930 or 33 that he will lead Germany into war some not so distant day. 2 Heuss, page XXXVI 3 v. Weizsäcker Papers, page 70 287 The Revelatory Value of Hitler's Speeches Historians and readers of today are inclined to "hear" their knowledge of the Third Reich and its dire end from Hitler's early speeches. But the listener of 1930 or 1934 did not have the level of knowledge of 1950 or 1960. He lacks at the time of the speeches the many associations that come automatically to postwar listeners or readers of these speeches. This phenomenon also preoccupied the Theodor Heuss Archive when, in 1968, it set about republishing the book by the now former German President Heuss, "Hitlers Weg" ("Hitler's Way"), dating from 1932. Heuss, then a member of the Reichstag for the German Democratic Party, describes Hitler's career and program. He criticizes both analytically clean, but without any bit of sharpness and polemics. This is obviously so embarrassing and suspicious to the Heuss Archive after the war that it commissions a renowned historian to provide the new edition with a preface and explanatory aids. Professor Jäckel, who writes the preface, urges readers of this 1932 Heuss book on Hitler and the NSDAP to "perform two mental operations" if they want to guard against quick misjudgments. According to Jäckel, there is no other way to understand the book as a historical source. He advises the reader: "For a certain time, he must banish all his knowledge of later things from his memory, put himself into the time, and he must keep in mind the circumstances and the environment of the author at that time. ...In the autumn of 1931, all that we know today –power seizure, rule, crime,

war, and the end of National Socialism –was still unknown, undreamed of, even unimaginable future." 4 This perspective of the early 1930s must be conceded today to those people who heard and read Hitler at the time. Former President Heuss himself later puts himself back in his position in 1931 when he writes about it: "My father gave me an education of bourgeois respectability in which crime did not occur as a current form of public life. Our imagination, even if we possessed some overview of atrocities as historical events, did not reach so far as to employ crime as an institutional form of state activity." 5 The same can probably be said of the entire German political and military elite in the early 1930s. The commandment not to impute later knowledge to the people of that time is generally disregarded today. It is often a matter of Hitler's quotations, the bad sense of which becomes obvious only later. How often one reads, for example, that Hitler 4 Heuss, page XXXIII 5 Heuss, page XXXI 288 speaks of the living space of the German people in this or that very specific speech already in 1933 or whenever. Today's reader immediately thinks of "Lebensraum im Osten" (living space in the East) and believes at the mention of the quotation that Hitler is already speaking so early of his plans for conquest in Poland or the Ukraine. However, if one then reads the speeches in the original text, it often says, mutatis mutandis: "Germany's living space is too narrow. The Germans must therefore be more intelligent, more industrious and more productive than other peoples." Who was supposed to think anything bad about that at the time? Many historians only quote the irritant word "Lebensraum" and thus create associations that the Germans could not have had in the 1930s. Another irritant word, taken out of context, often misused, is "war of extermination." Whoever wants to judge what German citizens and soldiers could know in 1933 or 1939 must read Hitler's speeches in their entirety, and he must forget what he knows of the further course of history. The revelatory value of Hitler's speeches in the 1930s is also diminished by the dictator himself. Hitler obviously knows how to conceal what the people would not accept. This also applies quite conspicuously to the later murder of millions of Jews. The archivist of Hitler's speeches, Dr. Max Domarus, sums up on this subject: "In his public and private speeches Hitler did not directly proclaim that he wanted to gas all Jews or otherwise transfer them from life to death. Even during the war, when his machinery of extermination was in full swing, he confined himself in his speeches to dark hints and threats. He knew only too well that such an extermination program would meet with rejection by the mass of the people and even by the majority of his party comrades." 6 Another factor that diminishes the revelatory value of Hitler's speeches is his habit of deceiving people when it seems appropriate for him to do so. At a press reception in Munich on November 10, 1938, Hitler himself exposes this as one of his dubious means of leadership when he says: "... Circumstances have forced me for decades to speak almost exclusively of peace. Only under the continued emphasis on the German will and intentions for peace was it possible for me to win freedom for the German people piece by piece and to give them the armament which was always necessary as a prerequisite for the next step... that such peace propaganda, carried on for decades, also has its dubious sides, for it can only too easily lead to the fact that ... the view takes root that the present regime is in itself identical with the resolution and the will to preserve a peace 7 under all circumstances." 7 6 Domarus, Vol. 2, page 25 7 Domarus, Vol. 1, page 974 289 Here Hitler dismantles himself by admitting his dishonesty. And he devalues all his peace speeches. The "next steps" mentioned here before the press people were the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland. Thus, even this speech at the time does not necessarily suggest that Hitler will open a war on his own. Rather, the press and the public can nourish from it the hope that Hitler's method of tough stance and tough negotiation will enforce the revision of the last outstanding injustices of Versailles, which the 16 Reich governments before 1933 had not succeeded in doing. But Hitler is now already letting it be known that he will go further, if necessary, to abolish the constraints of Versailles. He says in the same speech to the press: "That means, therefore, to illuminate certain processes in such a way that in the brain of the broad mass of the people quite automatically the

conviction is gradually triggered: if this just cannot be stopped in a good way, then it must be stopped by force; it cannot go on like this under any circumstances..." Fatal is Hitler's admission that he is deceiving and even more fatal his confession that he is ready to take action because of the still

still unresolved Versailles damage, he is prepared to go to war if necessary. There is no mention here of further war intentions. The press people are left with the hope that the still open Versailles problems of bringing the Memelland and the population of Danzig home to the Reich can be solved with Hitler's hard tour even without wars. The German public will not hear about the speech anyway. It will remain secret. Hitler's protestations of peace The "Führer" endeavors to present himself to the German people as a man of peace. In 1933, the First World War and the hardships that followed had just passed 15 years and less. Thus, with all the references to war, Versailles, hardship, expulsion, and foreign intransigence, Hitler addresses the life experiences

and feelings that move people at the time. Furthermore, foreign countries themselves serve as his best cues. At Versailles, it had been agreed to make peace in Europe more secure in the long run by disarming the armies, air and naval forces of all states. But only Germany, Austria and Hungary were disarming, and all the other states were failing to honor the treaty obligations they had entered into at Versailles. The Reich Chancellors before Adolf Hitler had already demanded that the French, British, Italians, Poles, and so on honor these disarmament pledges, and if this was not done, they demanded the right to rearm the 290 Reichswehr to a limited extent. Hitler continued these demands and insisted in public speeches on the fulfillment of the Treaty of Versailles by the victorious states as well. Hitler repeatedly offers negotiations on this subject in radio or Reichstag speeches. He proposes the outlawing of the bombing war. He offers to limit the numbers and sizes of battleships, tanks, and heavy artillery. But any arms limitation he proposes should then apply to all states. Except for the Anglo-German Naval Agreement offered by Hitler, none of this materializes. The victorious states stonewall and do not want to lose the gigantic armaments advantage they have over Germany in 1933, 34 and 35. In doing so, they play into the hands of Hitler, who easily gets public opinion on his side on this issue by making a few speeches. Hitler uses the breach of treaty and the intransigence of the victors, he uses their armament superiority, which was still threatening at first, and he uses the Germans' memories of the "invasions" of the Poles, Belgians, and French in the early 1920s to present peace, defense, and rearmament as parts of a whole to the people in his own country. The second advantage that the victors provide Hitler is the violation of the right of self-determination of the peoples for millions of German, Austrian, Ukrainian and Hungarian people, which they enforced. Again and again Adolf Hitler very cleverly links his protestations of peace with the request of all Germans for the return of the ten million compatriots separated by Versailles "home to the German Reich". On May 17, 1933, Hitler said before the Reichstag: "By clinging to our own nation in boundless love and loyalty, we also respect the national rights of the other peoples.... and would like to live with them in peace and friendship out of our deepest hearts. Therefore, we do not know the concept of Germanization. The mental mentality of the past century, out of which it was believed that it might be possible to make Germans out of Poles and Frenchmen, is as foreign to us as we are passionately opposed to any reverse attempt...It would have been fortunate for the world if in the Treaty of Versailles these realities had been appreciated also in relation to Germany....a considered treatment of the problems at that time in the East could easily have found a solution which would have accommodated the understandable claims of Poland as well as the natural rights of Germany." 8 8 Domarus, Volume 1, page 273 291 Fig. 7: Adolf Hitler in front of the Reichstag on May 17, 1933 Right: State Secretary Hans Heinrich Lammers, in the background: Hermann Göring as Reichstag President Hitler can be sure in 1933 that he is speaking from the soul of the German people. And after such a declaration of belief in the right of self-determination of peoples, which German citizen could have guessed that Hitler would not keep to what he had said six years later when he

occupied the Czech Republic? A Hitler speech of May 27, 1933, sounds quite similar: "As much as we as National Socialists refuse to want to make Germans out of foreign peoples, so fanatically do we resist the attempt to wrest the German man from his people. As much as we are moved by the realization that war brings suffering and misery to people, our love for our homeland obliges us to stand up for it. National Socialism knows no policy of border adjustments at the expense of foreign peoples. We do not want a war for the sole purpose of perhaps bringing a few million people to Germany who do not want to be Germans and cannot be Germans at all. We will never try to subjugate foreign people ..." 9 9

Domarus, Vol. 1, page 279 292 This Hitler speech resembles in its essence the Wilson speech of February 11, 1918, in which Wilson promises the German Reich government that there will be no territorial annexations against the will of the populations concerned if peace is concluded. That Hitler would later disregard the right of self-determination of the peoples with the same ruthlessness as the victors at Versailles, Trianon, and Saint-Germain before him could not be presumed by citizens and soldiers in Germany in 1933 after such speeches. Hitler's speeches and appeals for peace and social justice, for technical progress and full employment hit the needs and the desires of the German population. And since the promises were also realized during Hitler's first years in power, the majority of Germans overlooked the dark sides of the new dictatorship, sometimes approvingly, sometimes grudgingly. The suppression of opposition forces and the persecution of minorities are apparently something of a lesser evil in the judgment of the population after the periods of famine, unemployment and civil war in many parts of Germany. The perspective of those times puts many things in priorities that are not those of today. In 1934, for example, a certain Gustav Adolf Gedat, a functionary of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which represents Germany in the YMCA's world organization, wrote in his book "A Christian Experiences the Problems of the World": "Capitalism has run down, the old systems are crumbling. If the mighty work of National Socialism succeeds, if this unique program is fulfilled, then Germany will provide the world with proof that there is a way out of the chaos of the present, which will necessarily also become the way of the others..... Here lies the enormity of the task God has set for our Germany and its leader." 10 Gedat also did not know the world of 1939 at the time. The peace speeches shape Hitler's image until 1939. Again and again he emphasizes in interviews, speeches and conversations that as a soldier of the past world war he knows the suffering that wars bring to peoples and soldiers. He swears peace so often until one can no longer doubt his will for peace on rational grounds. Even on occasions that might tempt him to do so, he refrains from any saber rattling. Hitler's speeches on the annually repeated days of the Wehrmacht, even his swearing-in speeches before recruits of the Waffen-SS, contain no tones that suggest that Hitler wants to start a war and subjugate other peoples. Hitler repeatedly calls on the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS to "stand guard for Germany." These phrases shape the self-image of the new Wehrmacht into the war. The soldiers see 10 Gedat, page 30 293 themselves as the protectors of people and country and homeland. In an appeal by Hitler on October 14, 1933, one reads, "The German Reich government and the German people are united in the will to pursue a policy of peace, responsibility, and understanding." 11 Who can disagree? At the New Year's reception for the diplomatic corps on January 1, 1935, he speaks of the "hot desire of mankind for the preservation of peace" and says, "No country can feel the need for peace more deeply than 12 Germany." 12 At the New Year's reception the following year, 1936, he expresses the expectation of "real peace." In a newspaper interview with English journalist Ward Price in the DAILY MAIL of January 17, 1935, Hitler reads himself thus, "When I speak of peace, I express nothing but what is the deepest desire of the German people.... I know the horrors of war.... What I want is the happiness of my people! I have not seen that war is the highest happiness, but on the contrary, I saw only deepest suffering. I therefore speak two confessions quite openly: 1. Germany will never break the peace of her own accord and, 2. whoever touches us, grasps thorns and

spikes! For just as we love peace, so we love freedom." 13 The interview, which is also published two days later in the "Völkischer Beobachter," very cleverly addresses the longing for peace of both the English and German First World War generations. Hitler's message does not sound any different to the "browns" 14 in the first years of his chancellorship. On January 30, 1936, "the Führer" speaks in Berlin's Lustgarten before 30,000

men of the SA. It is a speech about the internals of the SA. But even here Hitler does not fail to touch on the subject of peace. "But we also want at the same time ..., to be a peace-loving element among the other peoples. We cannot repeat this often enough. We seek peace because we love it." 15 Hitler's campaign speeches from 1933 onward also always contain appeals for peace in the world. In all the years leading up to 1939, Hitler takes countless opportunities to communicate before large crowds. He gave interviews to the press at home and abroad. He gives speeches and lectures to farmers, industrialists, shipyard workers, party members, bankers, factory workers, teachers, soldiers, and 11 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 304 12 Domarus. Volume 1, page 467 13 Domarus. Vol. 1, page 476 14 Party color of the NSDAP 15 Domarus, Vol. 1, page 571 294 other groups. He uses fairs, launches, highway openings, dedication ceremonies for sports stadiums, and other spectacular occasions to address the media and the people. In these speeches, he almost always works through a repertoire of "messages" with which he captures public opinion for himself. In the process, the message of "peace" is repeated so often that many Germans believe it to be a piece of Hitler's essence. When

the occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 proves the opposite, it fits so poorly with the image that people in Germany generally have of Adolf Hitler that they first try to adapt the terrible reality to the "Führer's" false image of peace. This sounds like irrationality. But the German press provides more or less plausible explanations for what the German Reich undertakes first against the Czech Republic in 1939 and then against Poland in the same year. And this is also part of this irrational reality: the two countries, the Czech Republic and Poland, are often themselves the cue words for Hitler and the German press. The inhuman treatment of Germans in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the streams of refugees coming from both states, the breaches of treaties and the mobilizations at the wrong time give the German press plenty of material to underlay Hitler's actions with meaning. Hitler's call for peace never meant "peace at any price." Despite all the bitter experiences from the past and lost First World War, this finds acceptance in Germany. Just as in the Federal Republic after the Second World War one speaks of "peace in freedom" in order to exclude the idea of a graveyard peace under communist foreign rule, so from 1933 onwards it is always called "peace in secured freedom" or "peace in equality". This is self-evident for every German citizen in the Third Reich after years with occupation troops, with forced removals of livestock, coal and industrial products and after four invasions of foreign troops into the Reich territory in violation of international law. Hitler leads the German people onto dangerously thin ice by linking peace with security and equality. As justified as their own desire for security and equality is, it has a provocative effect on foreign countries. The Germans cannot understand that they are blamed for the First World War, that the victors still refuse to reduce their troop strength as promised, and that Germany is discriminated against in the League of Nations as a full member by being denied certain sovereign rights. At the same time, people abroad do not want to accept that the postwar order of Versailles cannot be maintained in the long run. Neither in Paris nor in London, Brussels or Rome do they understand that it would be better to reorganize the untenable themselves than to leave it to others to enforce it. The fatal thing about Hitler's public speeches between 1933 and 1939 is that they say security and equality for Germany and secretly mean insecurity and subordination for a few neighboring states. In Germany, people believe Hitler because they hope for peace. Abroad, they do not believe him because they fear the Germans. Unfortunately, the fear is justified. Adolf Hitler misused the Reich's newfound ability to protect itself to attack others with it. In retrospect, everyone is wiser, but at the

time of the speeches, one does not necessarily have to suspect behind Hitler's formulations what will come later. The daily order to the Reichswehr at the turn of the year 1934/35, for example, states, "Our service shall know only one goal in the future, Germany's resurgence in a peace of equality, honor, and secured freedom." 16 This tenor runs through a large number of speeches in the early years of his rule. He knows how to give a positive meaning to the reconstruction of the Wehrmacht and to allay fears in this regard. On September 13, 1935, Hitler addressed 100,000 party functionaries on the Zeppelin Meadows in Nuremberg and said of the reconstruction of the new German Wehrmacht: "This is the meaning of the new creation of our Wehrmacht. It was not created to wage wars of aggression, but to protect and defend our people, not to let Germany once again fall into a sad lot, as we had to endure behind us for 15 years. Not to take away the freedom of other peoples, but to protect our 17 German freedom, that is why it is there." 17 In the March 1936 election campaign, during which Hitler appeared as a speaker in eleven major German cities, he subsequently solicited voter approval for Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. None of his speeches lacked passages like the following: "The peoples long for peace, yes, but for a peace that lets them live side by side on an equal footing." (Election speech in Berlin) "My goal is peace based on the equality of peoples. We are a great power of Europe and want to be appreciated as a great power." (Election speech in Munich) "Do not speak of gestures and symbolic acts, but make peace. That is the wish of the peoples." (Election speech in Essen) Otherwise, Hitler masterfully knows how to meet the wishes, interests and sensitivities of the population: sports and vacations, wages and prices, education and culture, road construction and cheap cars for everyone and whatever else people dream of after the hardship of the 1920s: "I have the ambition to set up a monument to myself among the German people one day. But I also know that this monument is better to be erected in peace 16 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 464 17 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 530 296 than in a war. My ambition is that we create in Germany the best institutions for the education of our people. I want us in Germany to obtain the most beautiful stadiums, to develop our roads, to elevate and ennoble our culture; I want our cities to be beautified." 18 (Election speech in Karlsruhe) Because Hitler fulfills a large part of the election promises with time, he makes the majority of all Germans believe that he will also keep the promised peace. This belief in the "Führer" not only lasts until 1939, but it lasts until Hitler starts the war against the Soviet Union. The Overheard Warning Signals and Hitler's Inaugural Speech to Generals on February 3, 1933 Quiet undertones that suggest Hitler's later intentions are apparently only heard in closed circles. A speech that is often cited as proof of his aggressive plans from the outset, he delivers as newly appointed Reich Chancellor on February 3, 1933, before a larger circle of top Reich military officers. Four days after taking office, Hitler addresses some 30 senior officers at the private residence of General von Hammerstein-Equord, the head of the army command. The content of the speech is preserved in three similar transcripts. These are notes by the army general Curt Liebmann¹⁹, Hammerstein's adjutant, Major i.G. von Mellenthin²⁰, and, perhaps surprisingly, by the daughter Helga of the host chief of the army command.²¹ As a girl, Helga von Hammerstein-Equord pursued a "career" from the Socialist Students' League via the Communist Youth League to the KPD, which she joined in 1930. From then until 1937, she regularly supplied the Communist Intelligence Service with secret documents from her father's house. Thus, on February 14, 1933, a copy of an unofficially prepared transcript of the Hitler lecture in her father's house is received by the aforementioned service in 22 Moscow. There is some doubt that Helga is the supplier of this transcript.²² The following description of Hitler's speech to the generals is based on all three sources mentioned. Hitler introduces himself and his policies to the Reichswehr generals in this speech. He courts their favor and trust. On the one hand, the newly appointed chancellor says, which was also expected of him at the time, that he strives for the equality of the German Reich among the nations 18 Domarus, vol. 1, page 604 19 Jacobsen, page 81 20 IFZ document ZS 105 21 Wirsching, pages 545 ff 22

Wirsching, pages 522 ff 297 that he wants to pursue the revision of the Treaty of Versailles and that he intends to "eradicate" Marxism in his own country. On the other hand, he declares some things that the generals are sure to like to hear. Hitler wants to keep the Reichswehr neutral in terms of party politics and use it solely for foreign policy disputes. For domestic political disputes, he had the NSDAP. Hitler promised the generals that the Reichswehr would remain the only army in Germany. This was an important word in view of the competitive behavior of the SA, which had grown to become powerful.

And Hitler announces that he will rearm the Reichswehr. This brings the new chancellor to the part of his speech that could have been an early warning to the generals. He states that the problems of unemployment, population growth, and economic hardship cannot be solved with loans and subsidies on the domestic market, but only with an economy that brings exports to the world market "by all means and at any price," or better, with a large-scale settlement policy that requires new settlement space. He still formulates this as a proposal and mentions 50 to 60 years as the framework of such a policy. Then Hitler comes to the later often quoted word of "Germanizing". He makes it clear that in his opinion one cannot "Germanize" people of another language or race. "One can only Germanize soil." Hitler thereby mentions that his Lebensraum ideas "probably aim at the East." Following the logic of the thought that one cannot "Germanize" foreign people, he says: "One must, like Poland and France, ruthlessly expel a few million people after the war." Hitler is referring to the many "voluntary" and forced mass resettlements and expulsions of recent years in France, Poland, Greece, Turkey, and Czechoslovakia. He shows no scruples in these words, and the generals are not unaware of this theme from reality. From this idea of settlement space Hitler develops his program in front of the generals: consolidation of the economy to solve the problem of living space, which he sees in this way, if necessary by using armed forces. Today's reader must ask himself why the generals here do not hear the bomb ticking, which Hitler obviously carries in his pocket. Surely some of the generals present are puzzled by or alarmed by this passage of Hitler's lecture.

Most will probably consider the idea half-baked stuff in view of the reality of 1933. The Reichswehr was still a dwarf next to the armies and fleets of the many neighboring states, the compulsory requirements of Versailles were still in force, high unemployment was still depressing, and Germany's coffers were still empty. Hitler's thoughts about a war of aggression for colonies or settlement areas seem almost grotesque. After the lecture, Major General von Brauchitsch commented: "Well, he'll be surprised in his lifetime. And Colonel Fromm, the head of the Wehrmacht 298 amts, says to Lieutenant General Freiherr von Fritsch: "that the exorbitant plans would fail due to the harshness of the facts and would be reduced to a sober measure".²³ The lecture of a new head of government, who after four days in office speaks about settlement plans in the next 50 to 60 years, will certainly not have been taken very seriously, given that the average duration of the governments of German chancellors since 1919 has been less than one year. At the time of the speech that must not be overlooked there are some interpretations that defuse Hitler's insinuations in obvious good faith as an exaggerated formulation of an idea that is understandable in itself. At the beginning of the century, feeding the population was still a political task of the first order. The memory of the famine of 1918/19 is fresh in everyone's mind. Thus, some are forewarned by Hitler's oft-repeated mentions of the Lebensraum question, while others find trivializing explanations for this Hitlerian idea. Foreign Minister von Neurath, for example, who otherwise does not shy away from criticizing Hitler in conversations with foreign diplomats he trusts, categorically denies on such an occasion that "Lebensraum" could mean the forcible annexation of foreign territories. Explaining this, he adds that Hitler means means means of subsistence, raw materials and the like when he mentions Lebensraum. It is regrettable that Hitler expresses himself as if it were a matter of territorial expansion²⁴. That von Neurath is mistaken here, he admits later himself. Not every saber rattling has to be interpreted as the intention of a head of government to start a war on his own initiative. The excerpt

from his inaugural speech in March 1933, for example: "The nation's difficulties can only be mastered if we tackle them as we would in the event of war. We must march forward like a well-trained army ready to make sacrifices to general discipline, because without discipline neither progress is possible nor leadership can achieve anything. The nation has come before the altar of history and must seize the historically unrepeatable opportunity in obedient devotion to duty such as is otherwise required of a people only in time of war." 25 comes from U.S. President Roosevelt as he explains his New Deal economic and social program. Theatrical words and the explanation of economic issues in the dress of military phrases are not uncommon in the 1930s, as the example shows. The American listeners, too, will not have immediately expected war when they heard the words of their new president. 23 Wirsching, page 543 24 Kunert, page 63 25 Kunert, page 35 299 The talk of peace, of Germany's greatness, and of the National Socialists' reconstruction efforts continues until 1939. In his speeches, Hitler often railed against Bolshevism, the Jews, capitalism, the incorrigible bourgeoisie, the church and foreign countries. The "narrow living space of the Germans" is also a recurring theme. Although Hitler already advises in his book "Mein Kampf" 26 to renounce the former imperial colonies and to acquire living space east of Germany instead, he sporadically mentions a claim to the former German colonies in the speeches. It can be assumed that he merely wanted to keep in mind the question of space and food, which he regarded as a problem. At first, such speeches do not allow conclusions about concrete plans for conquest, since Hitler usually leaves the mention of the problem in the room with comprehensible thoughts. In a radio address on May 1, 1937, for example, he says: "Our life problems are more difficult than those of other peoples.... We Germans have been more than neglected by nature on this earth. A great people, an infinitely capable people, an industrious people who want to live and who are allowed to make demands on life, live in a space which is much too narrow and too limited to be able, even with the greatest diligence, to give them from our own resources all that is necessary. Precisely because this struggle for life is much more difficult with us than anywhere else, we have to draw special consequences from this fact, which is our destiny. We cannot exist on phrases, on sayings and theories, but only on the result of our work, our ability and 27 our intelligence." 27 Hitler then continues the radio speech with thoughts on production, the four-year plan, and wage and price stability. In 1937, the man in the street will have thought to this, "A scoundrel who thinks bad things." From 1941 on, the words "we have to draw special consequences from this fact" will be interpreted quite differently. Hitler's public speeches before the invasion of Wehrmacht troops into the rest of Czechoslovakia in spring 1939 do not reveal any war intentions. They rather correspond to the yearning for peace of the broad mass of all Germans at that time. The situation is different with some of Hitler's secret speeches from November 1937 onwards. The secret Hitler speeches and the key documents From November 1937 onwards, a few of Hitler's speeches take on a new quality. These are speeches before a closed circle, which for the first time allow conclusions to be drawn about Hitler's intention to wage war on his own initiative. Especially worth mentioning are the three speeches of November 5, 1937, May 23, 1939, and August 22, 1939, which historians regard as the key to revealing Hitler's criminal plans to wage war, break treaties, subjugate peoples, and conquer land. The term "key" comes from the Nuremberg Trials of 1945 and 46, in which the transcripts of these speeches, as so-called key documents, are considered evidence of the guilt of the "main defendants." The political rulers and the top military leaders of the Third Reich are accused in the trial of "joint planning of the war and a conspiracy against peace." The key documents are supposed to prove that Hitler had revealed his plans to the defendants in Nuremberg, that they had thus become conspirators and consequently jointly responsible for the outbreak of the Second World War. The so-called key speeches contrast in some ways with Hitler's public speeches. However, there are doubts about the truthful transcription of these speeches. Therefore, the Nuremberg key documents containing the secret speeches must be closely examined. In the case of the first of these

key speeches, the editor of the collected Hitler speeches, archive director Dr. Max Domarus himself admits that there are such doubts, but he erases them by pointing out that Hitler's later wartime policy confirmed the authenticity of the speech transcripts in retrospect²⁸. This logic can only prove Hitler's guilt in the war, but not that of his listeners, who –which is thus further open from November 1937– knew Hitler's plans or not. The correct or incorrect rendition of these Hitler speeches is of decisive importance for the question whether the Wehrmacht leadership recognized Hitler's intention to wage war on his own initiative or not.

to wage war on their own initiative or not. In a legal assessment of the probative value of those documents, there are strong doubts. Hitler's Speech of November 5, 1937 and the Hoßbach Minutes The first of the three key speeches it is dated November 5, 1937²⁹ is actually a meeting. War Minister von Blomberg asks Hitler for a conference to discuss urgent armaments and raw materials issues with him and the commanders-in-chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht. Historians call it a speech because essentially only what Hitler says in the meeting has been preserved. The "speech" is named today after the 28 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 756 29 Domarus, Vol. 1, pp. 748 ff. 301 man who produced its transcript, Colonel Friedrich Hoßbach, Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant at the time. The transcript has misleadingly gone down in history as the Hoßbach "Protocol," but it has no protocol character. Hoßbach, who cannot take shorthand, writes down from memory five days after that meeting of Hitler and the generals what he has retained of it. When he presented the paper to Hitler for inspection and control, Hitler had no time to look it over and confirm the contents with his paraphrase. After War Minister von Blomberg and Army Chief of Staff General Beck have read the handwritten memorial transcript, it goes into the files. In the Nuremberg trial, the "Hoßbach minutes" reappear as the main incriminating evidence against the participants of that meeting eight years ago.³⁰ But what is now presented as the minutes is not Hoßbach's original paper. It is a photocopy of a typewritten transcript of that Hoßbach transcript. General Hoßbach is questioned in March and June 1946 as a prisoner of war – but not as a witness in the trial on this "Hoßbach protocol". He testifies that he cannot confirm that the present copy corresponds in all parts with his transcript of 1937³¹. But "in summa" the copy is the reproduction of his original³². "In summa" means, not in detail. Hoßbach did not have his transcript typed out himself. This is done in 1943 or 44 by an officer who hands over the copy "in trust" to a relative who then forwards it to the enemy powers³³. The path of the Hoßbach transcript from 1937 to 1946 leaves a few questions unanswered. It may be that the "Hoßbach Minutes" reflect, in terms of content,

acuity, and nuance, what Hitler revealed to the general in November 1937. It may also be that the transcript was revised on its way to Nuremberg in such a way that it only becomes evidence as a result. After all, Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant von Below writes that, according to his recollection, the copy is longer than the original he saw³⁴. Reichsmarschall Göring points out in 1946 in the Nuremberg trial that some of the points and formulations in the present "piece of evidence" were so not the style of the "Führer" ³⁵. Grand Admiral Raeder also doubts the authenticity of the transcript and copy and requests in the trial that the original of the transcript be presented, which is in the possession of the Americans³⁶. His lawyer wants to check whether montages have been made between the 30 IMT Documents, Volume XXV, pages 402ff, Document 386-PS/US-25 31 IMT Documents, Volume XLII, page 229 32 IMT Documents, Volume XLII, page 229 and Hoßbach, page 192 33 Hoßbach, page 190 34 v. Below, page 49 35 IMT Negotiations, Volume IX, page 344 36 IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, page 43 and Raeder, Volume 2, page 150 302 machine copy and the photocopy. The court rejects this request. The Americans refuse to submit the original of the typewriter copy for examination. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that the copy presented at the trial contains a few incriminating "unambiguities" and exaggerations that did not come from Hitler's mouth. The suspicion and its refutation must remain

open. Another suspicion for the "haircut" on the Hoßbach protocol comes up with the marginal notes that the original or the copies are supposed to have carried. Hoßbach knows nothing about the annotations during his interrogation, but he may be mistaken. The photocopy of the copy presented as evidence in Nuremberg bears such marginal notes by Reich Minister of War von Blomberg, Colonel General Freiherr von Fritsch, and, according to the testimony of the British chief prosecutor Shawcross, also a written marginal note by Fritsch's successor, Colonel General von Brauchitsch³⁷. Von Fritsch, although present at that conference, embarks on a long journey to Egypt on the day Hoßbach writes his paper. Hoßbach himself doubts that von Fritsch ever read his "protocol". With von Brauchitsch, on the other hand, the facts are quite clear. According to all the logic of the information strands and responsibilities, he cannot have seen von Hoßbach's paper. Von Brauchitsch then also testifies in Nuremberg that he only learned about the entire conference and a protocol about it during the trial, that his predecessor in office, Fritsch, also did not inform him about that meeting in November 1937 when he handed over his official duties at the beginning of February 1938, and that even the Chief of General Staff, Beck, did not mention the meeting³⁸. So at least the marginal note by Brauchitsch on the "minutes" if not also the one by Fritsch is a forgery. The obvious manipulation of the marginal notes, just like the aforementioned oddities, very much calls into question the credibility of the paper presented at Nuremberg. The dispute about that Hoßbach protocol is ignited by the content. The prosecutors in Nuremberg see the transcript as proving that Hitler had opened his war intention to the gentlemen present, and that they were therefore complicit and complicit. Thus, what is decisive is what Hitler actually says in November 1937 and not what Hoßbach puts down on paper from it. Grand Admiral Raeder testifies before the Nuremberg Military Tribunal that he and Reich War Minister von Blomberg did not take away from that conference the impression that Hitler had wanted to replace his previous peace policy with a new war policy. The accused Grand Admiral therefore demands the summoning of General Hoßbach, who would be available as a witness at the time. The court refuses to interrogate Hoßbach in the presence of Raeder or his defense counsel, Dr. Siemers. ³⁷ Dreessen, page 184 ³⁸ IMT, Vol. XX, page 620 303 The probative value of the so-called Hoßbach protocol is thus subject to no less than four reservations. First, it is not certain that after five days Colonel Hoßbach put on paper exactly what was spoken in the conference. Second, it is not known whether the first copy reproduces the contents of the handwritten notes completely unchanged. The copyist is unknown and no certification of the copy has survived. Just as little is vouched for that the photocopy presented in Nuremberg corresponds to this copy. Thirdly, the manipulation of the marginal notes increases the suspicion that other things have been changed as well. And fourth, it increases all doubts that the military court in Nuremberg avoided questioning Hoßbach in the presence of Raeder. The researchers of the Military Historical Research Office (MGFA) do not share all these doubts. They consider the authenticity of the contents of the protocol proven by "source-critical examinations" and the surviving reaction of the Chief of Staff of the Army Beck. The MGFA thus refers to a general who was not present, to Colonel General Beck. Despite all reservations about the copy of Hoßbach's transcript presented at Nuremberg, the reactions of the six gentlemen present prove how explosive Hitler's remarks must have been on that November evening. The ministers and generals here understood very well that Hitler must from now on have been prepared to play with the fire of a new war. Foreign Minister von Neurath, War Minister von Blomberg, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army von Fritsch attempt to refute and restrain Hitler in the meeting with arguments of their respective expertise. They certainly exercise their responsibility as political advisors to Chancellor Hitler. Foreign Minister von Neurath feels so burdened by Hitler's willingness to revise the provisions of Versailles and Saint-Germain by military force if necessary that he asks to leave. He testifies to the meeting in question before his Nuremberg judges: "Even if these plans, which Hitler presented in a long speech, had no concrete content and allowed for various possibilities, it

was nevertheless apparent to me that the overall tendency of his plans was aggressive in nature." 39 Colonel General von Fritsch attempted to change Hitler's mind once again during a conversation on November 10. Fritsch, from then on a trip to Egypt, is represented in his absence by Beck, Chief of Staff of the Army. Beck, who did not attend the meeting himself, was "devastated" by the "minutes." 40 Knowledge of this Hoßbach transcript prompted Beck to write three memoranda against Hitler's risky policy. 39 IMT Verhandlungen, Band XVI, Seite 700 40 Hoßbach, Seite 191 304 The reactions of the ministers and generals show that Hitler obviously revealed something extraordinary to them that evening, his intention to change the previous course of German foreign and security policy. Until then, the course had been aimed solely at the equality of Germany, at the revision of Versailles and Saint-Germain, and at the defense capability of the German Reich. The significance of Hitler's speech of November 5, 1937, is based on the fact that here, for the first time, it becomes apparent that the dictator intends to take advantage of the "opportunities" of future European wars between other states and, if the opportunity is favorable, to pursue annexations himself. Hitler does not open a "war plan", as the MGFA puts it⁴¹, to the generals and ministers. But now to the content of this Hitler speech, as left to us by the Nuremberg judges. Hitler first explains to the six gentlemen assembled on that November evening that he wants to orient them about "his fundamental thoughts on the possibilities of development of the foreign policy situation. Right at the beginning he emphasized that his foreign policy was designed for the long term, and that he asked them to regard the following remarks as his political testament in the event of his death. This statement is significant in that it provides information about Hitler's territorial objectives in November 1937. It even allows the assumption that at this time he had no further goals beyond the "opening of his will". As his first topic, Hitler states that he sees his political task in maintaining the basis of life and nutrition for the 85 million Germans, including the expected increase in population. He derives from this "the right to greater living space" and reflects on the question of whether the German space shortage is to be remedied by economic autarky or by increased participation in world trade or otherwise. On economic autarky, Hitler says that it is unattainable, at least for ore raw materials and foodstuffs. Participation in the world economy was therefore inevitable in his opinion. Then, in his speech, Hitler weighs the options Germany has in doing so. He rejects a dependence of the German economy on free trade across the world's oceans, because this trade is subject to the whim of England. Here it can be assumed that Hitler is thinking of the British hunger blockade against Germany of 1918 and 1919. Next Hitler comes to the possibilities of overseas colonial acquisition. He rules this out on the grounds that all the colonies in Africa and Asia are spread out and cannot be won without wars against England or France. Therefore, agriculturally usable areas and mineral resources within Europe were the solution he had in mind. With these words about the "too narrow living space" Hitler does not yet show what he has in mind. He does not mention Poland, the Ukraine or Russia with a single syllable. 41 MGFA, Mil.Gesch., page 188 305 Hitler, it should be noted here, was well aware of the danger inherent in the solution he was considering with more living space within Europe. Only shortly before this November conference, the British opposition delegate Winston Churchill

had told the German ambassador in London von Ribbentrop in no uncertain terms, during an exchange of views on Hitler's considerations in this regard, that England would never tolerate any attempts by Germany to expand eastward⁴². Under the obvious impression of these clear words of Churchill, Hitler ended this part of his remarks with the sentence: "For the solution of the German question there can only be the way of force. This will never be without risk." On the question of the use of force, Hitler now turns to three possibilities, which he calls three "cases." Case one would be a war between 1943 and 1945. Hitler explains that with a growing population and a lack of reserves, the German Reich would be threatened with food crises from 1943 to 1945 in the event of poor harvests, which, due to a lack of

foreign currency, could not be overcome by purchasing food abroad alone. Germany needed an external market, but foreign countries were closing off more and more. The Wehrmacht was now almost ready and Germany's strength could hardly be increased now. The foreign military, on the other hand, was only just beginning to emerge. Sometime before 1943, the peak of Germany's relative strength would be passed. And since "the world is expecting our blow and is taking more countermeasures from year to year," Hitler said, "it is better to act first ourselves." Thus, he said, it was his unalterable decision to solve the spatial question by 1943 to 1945 at the latest. What exactly Hitler has in mind territorially with this, he does not reveal to the generals at first, even at this point. Cases two and three deal with France's role in Europe and in Africa. Should France ever be tied down by a civil war at home or because of its disputes with Italy or Spain, he, Adolf Hitler, wants to use that to "settle the Czech and Austrian questions." This turn of Hitler's words is the crux of the matter. Hitler's remarks that evening, as recorded by Colonel Hoßbach, deal exclusively with "Lebensraum" in Czechoslovakia and with the annexation of Austria. There is not a single mention of Lebensraum in Eastern Europe. What Hitler otherwise discusses at length before his six listeners are the possible reactions of Great Britain, France, Italy, Poland and the Soviet Union. He does not indicate with a word that he might have intentions of attack against these states. Nor does the Bolshevik threat become an issue that evening, so Hitler does not bring up a war with Russia. 42 Churchill, World War, page 98 306 Since Hitler refers to his long remarks on the "possibilities for development of the foreign policy situation" as his testament, what he presents here is, to all appearances, comprehensive. He wants the annexation of Austria and he wants the Czech Republic. This "last will" in November 1937 does not speak of anything else. From November 5, 1937, Foreign Minister von Neurath, the four leading heads of the Wehrmacht and Colonel Hoßbach know that Hitler is willing, if necessary, to wage war on his own initiative in order to annex Austria and the Czech Republic to the German Reich. What obviously startles the gentlemen present, according to Hoßbach's transcript, at this turn of the meeting is Hitler's apparent willingness to wage war. What probably does not bother them to the same extent is Hitler's will to change borders. This is nothing special in Europe at the time. In those years, England has claims on Ireland, Spain on Italy, Italy on France, Poland and Hungary on Czechoslovakia, Lithuania and Russia on Poland, and Norway on Denmark. Border areas are hardly sacred to anyone in Europe in the 1930s. As far as Austria and the German-populated part of Czechoslovakia are concerned, an annexation to the German Reich would only be an execution of the right of self-determination of the people concerned. The representatives of the people in Austria and in the Sudeten territories themselves decided in 1918 in the Vienna National Assembly to join Germany. As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, Hitler ends his remarks by describing two possibilities. In the event, he says, that an anticipated war by the Italians, the Spanish and the French over their mutual territorial claims leads to a mobilization of the other states in Europe, he wants to "use this favorable opportunity, which presents itself only once, for a campaign against Czechoslovakia". In the event, however, that the other states stayed out of a war between the Mediterranean countries, he wanted to do the same. Apart from that, the Hoßbach protocol states that Hitler reckoned with the gain of food for five to six million people in case of an annexation of Austria and the Czech Republic, if he based this on the "forced emigration" of two million people from the Czech Republic and one million from Austria. This is the end of the famous Hoßbach protocol. The second part of the meeting of November 5 is concerned solely with armaments issues and has not survived. At this conference in a small circle, Hitler let it be known for the first time that he would wage war on his own initiative if the opportunity arose. But he limited this to Austria and the Czech Republic. He speaks of "testament" and thus conveys that he sees no further goals beyond these two neighboring countries. There is no mention here of the great war, of living space in the Ukraine, or of a later campaign against Bolshevism and the Soviet Union. Hitler even relativizes his assessment that a war with France will come in the long run by

repeatedly saying that he does not want a war with France or England. Hitler does not outline a plan on November 5, 1937. He reveals his intentions with regard to Austria and the Czech Republic, speaks of many possibilities and thus ultimately leaves open what he has decided on in concrete terms. Thus, neither the suspicion of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal that the participants of that meeting in November 1937 had "jointly planned a war" nor the suspicion that they had instigated "a conspiracy against peace" is justified. Rather, von Neurath, von Blomberg, and von Fritsch contradicted Hitler's mind games still in the conversation and several times later. On the contrary, the army leadership clearly took a stand against a possible conquest of the Czech Republic with the three memoranda of Chief of General Staff Beck already mentioned. Beck was dismissed when he tried to turn a majority of the generals against Hitler. One cannot speak of a conspiracy of the six generals and ministers against peace. Whether every detail and formulation that has been handed down in the Hoßbach minutes presented at Nuremberg, and whether every expression of readiness for violence and cynicism that can be read there is really original

Hitler, cannot be said in view of the doubts about the authenticity of the paper. Falsifications of other Hitler speeches do not make this unlikely. For the connivance and co-responsibility of the generals and ministers present, what is decisive is what Hitler actually said on that November 5, 1937. This includes the choice of words and nuances, the omissions and additions. Neither the public nor the military in Germany learn of all' this struggle for a policy of peace or war. Even when the commander-in-chief of the army changes three months later, Colonel General von Fritsch does not inform his successor von Brauchitsch about the contents of that meeting. At that time, no one in Germany would have assumed that the Wehrmacht could serve for anything other than the protection of the country and its people. On November 5, 1937, Germany and Poland also conclude a new agreement for the protection of minorities, which leads no one to suspect that Hitler is thinking about wars of aggression on the same day. For the public, Hitler continues his campaign for peace. The population in the country and with it the soldiers of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS thus have no reason to fear the worst, even after the general meeting of November 5, 1937. In the New Year's speech of 1938, for example, Hitler speaks of the future of the nation and adds the following thought: "In terms of foreign policy, this requires the expansion of the German Wehrmacht. For only as a strong state do we believe that we will be able to preserve for our people in the future, in such troubled times, that good which seems to us the most precious, peace. For the re-establishment of the German nation has taken place without any external attack, only through the achievements of our people within...That the grace of the Lord God may also accompany our German people on its path of destiny in the coming year, be our deepest request." 43 With such a New Year's message, who could suspect anything bad? Hitler's New Tone Toward Foreign Countries The year 1938 brings the Sudeten crisis. At the Munich Conference, the governments of England, France, Italy, and Germany decide that the Habsburg-German Sudetenland should be detached from Czechoslovakia and transferred to the German Reich. The renewed success revives popular confidence in his apparent method of bringing the Germans, separated by Versailles, "home to the Reich" by threat, stubbornness, and negotiation alone. At first the German people have reason to believe Hitler's assurance that Germany has no interest in the Czechs. After the success of the Munich Conference, Hitler begins to reinterpret the homecoming of the Sudeten Germans in public speeches as his own sole achievement. He belittles the support of the governments in London and Paris, which as it really was only helped under his threat. Hitler thus snubs the foreign countries in a completely unnecessary way. The New Year's speech of 1939 sounds very similar to the one of 1938. It is filled with thanks for the "homecoming" of the Austrians and the Sudeten Germans in the past year. It ends: "For the rest, however, we have only one

wish, as always, that in the coming year we may also succeed in contributing to the general pacification of the world. May the grace of the Lord God accompany our German people on its path of destiny." 44 Even in the only brief New Year's order to the Wehrmacht, Hitler does not strike any aggressive tones: "Soldiers!... I am sure that in the future, too, you will always be ready to protect the vital rights of the nation against anyone." 45 Thus, German citizens and members of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS enter the war year 1939 with Hitler's protestations of peace in their ears and in their consciousness. 43 Domarus, Vol. 1, p. 774 44 Domarus, Vol. 2, p. 1025 45 Domarus, Vol. 2, p. 1027 309 In 1939, Hitler's speeches take on a new undertone. The dictator becomes more self-confident after the successes of the previous years and tends to boast, polemicize and provoke. But he still does not say in public speeches that he is willing to wage war for further goals. Nevertheless, the readiness for consensus with the victors of 1918 decreases audibly. On January 30, 1939, Hitler delivers a government declaration before the Reichstag in the Krolloper in Berlin, which he begins, as politicians all over the world do, with a long list of his own successes. He thanks the heads of government of the three states who gave their approval in Munich for the return of the Sudeten Germans, but then he falls for the "recipe for success" of Munich and flexes his muscles. He explains that the solution of the Sudeten question was only possible because he threatened war. What comes next is understandable, but extremely unwise for the chancellor of a middle power: "Germany has established the right of self-determination for ten million German comrades in an area where neither the English nor other nations have any business. It has thereby threatened no one, it has only defended itself against the attempt of third parties to interfere. And I need not assure you, my deputies, that in the future, too, we will not tolerate Western states simply trying to interfere in certain matters which concern only us, in order to prevent natural and reasonable solutions by interfering." 46 Apart from the glossed-over phrase with "no one threatened," Hitler's words convey two beliefs that will subsequently be his and the German people's undoing. The first is that stubbornness and determination will succeed in any case. The second is that Germany's further policy of revision to compensate for the outstanding Versailles damage is possible single-handedly and without the consent of the former victors. Hitler's disastrous foreign policy blunders of 1939 begin with these two wrong lines of thought: the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia and the attack against Poland. The aforementioned government declaration of January 30, 1939, focuses on economic issues and the narrow living space of the Germans. On this subject Hitler states that the expansion of the living space is not possible at present and asks: "Under the circumstances that now exist, however, there is no other way for us than that of continuing an economic policy which must try to get the most out of the given living space. This requires an ever greater increase in our output and an increase in production. ... "47 46 Domarus, Vol. 2, p. 1049 47 Domarus, Vol. 2, p. 1053 310 That Adolf Hitler would abuse the breakup of Czechoslovakia only six weeks later to conquer the first piece of "living space in the East" with the rest of Czechoslovakia cannot be suspected by any of the deputies present at these words. Hitler continues his governmental declaration with a scolding of the American and English press, which has insinuated that Germany wants to "attack England and America". He rants about Jews and Bolsheviks and concludes by discussing Germany's relationship with foreign countries. In doing so, however, he again solicits the friendship of the Americans, the British and the French, but with a side blow. Hitler forbids the interference of foreign countries in German affairs "with all friendship". In doing so, he appeals to the will of foreign governments for peace and concludes the speech with a reference to the currently good relationship with neighbor Poland. The speech may have rung well and flattered German ears after years of victor's despotism and hardship, but it was poison for the Reich's foreign relations. Hitler again gave the German people the illusion of peace with their neighbors. This may well be due to the fact that in January 1939 he himself still had illusions about German-Polish relations. According to the chronological sequence, Hitler's speech of February 10, 1939

should be mentioned here. But because Hitler gave it to the closed circle of army commanders, it should follow only after the chapter "Hitler's New Tone Towards Foreign Countries". In the first half of March 1939, Czechoslovakia breaks apart in a dispute between the Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians, and Hitler makes Czechoslovakia a protectorate of the German Reich with an enforced treaty. In Germany, the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia is not popular. One wonders if it was necessary and registers the breach of word. After all, when Hitler came into office, he announced in a radio speech on May 27, 1933: 48 "We will never seek to subjugate foreign people." 48 As Reichswehr troops marched into the unprotected Rhineland, Hitler said, "We have no territorial claims to make in Europe." 49 Four days before the Sudeten Germans return home to the Reich, he repeats to a large audience at the Berlin Sportpalast, "It is the last territorial demand I ha-be50 to make in Europe..We don't want any Czechs at all51." With the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, Hitler makes himself a liar for the first time in front of his own people. 48 Domarus, Vol. 1, page 279 49 On March 7, 1936, Domarus, Vol. 1, page 596 50 On September 26, 1939, Domarus, Vol. 1, page 927 51 On September 26, 1939, Domarus, Vol. 1, page 932 311 Two weeks after the Rest of Czechoslovakia occupation, on March 31, England offers Poland a guarantee of protection against Germany, and Poland henceforth stands stubbornly on the Danzig question. Hitler is outraged. He does not want to understand that the move to Prague is the beginning of a wrong path. The day after England's offer to Poland, on April 1.

1939, Hitler uses the launching of the battleship "Tirpitz" in Wilhelmshaven for a public appearance and speech. He tries to justify his actions in the Czech Republic and reacts indignantly to the offer of the British to the Poles. On the one hand, he justifies the takeover of Czechia with a customary right from the thousand years of common German-Czech history and, on the other hand, with the danger that has always emanated from a French or Russian use of the Czech military airfields against Germany. Then, and this is of importance for the further course of events of the years 1939-1940, Hitler settles accounts with the "virtuous" British. "If today an English statesman thinks that one can and must solve all problems by frank promises and negotiations, then I would only like to say to this statesman: there was an opportunity to do so for 15 years before our time! If the world says today that one should divide the peoples into virtuous nations and those that are not virtuous - and to the virtuous nations belong first of all the English and the French, and to the not virtuous belong the Germans and the Italians -, then we can only answer: The judgment whether a people is virtuous or not virtuous ... By what means have the virtuous nations acquired a quarter of the world ? ... They have not been virtuous methods. For 300 years this England has acted only as an unvirtuous nation, to talk now in her old age of virtue." 51 The jabs at England and France are not entirely unwarranted, given the last colonial acquisitions of both countries only two decades ago, but Hitler continues the speech with a capital error. He calls the British offer to the Poles, proposed the previous day, a sign of encirclement of the German Reich, and threatens, if a military treaty is concluded between Warsaw and London, to abrogate in his turn the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935. Britain's power and world empire rest on naval superiority, and Hitler here strikes England's sheer nerve with full force. When he actually carries out his threat a few days later, he breaks the bridge he himself built four years ago on his way to an understanding with Britain. England now has one more reason to wage war against Germany. This Wilhelmshaven speech startles in Germany above all the leadership of the Kriegsmarine, which immediately sees the growing danger of a British-German clash, and which remembers that the United States, with its sympathy, is always on England's side. The Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Raeder, takes his responsibility as an advisor to Reich Chancellor Hitler very seriously, and several times bears him out that Germany is no match for a naval war with Great Britain. He warns against irritating the British in any way. And Hitler assures Raeder each time that he will not let it come to war with Britain. Goering, too, advises Hitler to avoid false steps toward Britain. He gets the same appeasing answers as Grand Admiral Raeder. In a few

official appearances in the period afterward, Hitler repeats this game. He accuses the British of their own record of sins while soliciting their partnership. The top generals and admirals warn Hitler, but they respect his political decisions. They hope that Hitler will not overstep the mark. According to their present view of things, there is also nothing left to settle after a final solution of the still open Danzig question. Even after the secret meeting of November 5, 1937, recorded by Hoßbach, there is apparently nothing more to be done. In

the opinion of the Wehrmacht leadership, the announcements of a larger living space have already been fulfilled with Austria and the Czech Republic. So far there is no talk of a war against the Soviet Union. And Hitler has also always said that he wants to avoid wars against France or England of his own accord, even if he considers them unavoidable in the long run. Thus, with the Wilhelmshaven speech, for the generals and admirals only the risky imprudence of the politician Adolf Hitler is currently at issue, but not an intention to unleash a new world war. For them, the protection of the German Reich is still the role for which they built and rearmed the new Wehrmacht. To this point belongs once again Hitler's speech of April 28, 1939, which is mentioned earlier in this book. On April 14, U.S. President Roosevelt had sent Hitler a letter urging him "out of concern for all the other peoples of the Western Hemisphere" not to attack 31 named states for the next 10 or better 25 years. Furthermore, Roosevelt had proposed negotiations on disarmament. Hitler responds with the Reichstag speech already mentioned, that the German Reich had disarmed ten years ago, that the victorious states had not fulfilled their treaty obligations to disarm likewise at that time, and he refers to his own disarmament proposals, all of which the victors had rejected from their position of strength at that time. And Hitler sarcastically asks Roosevelt why he should also guarantee Hitler the independence of the Republic of Ireland, when the Irish President de Valera had just complained that Ireland was "suffering from the continual aggressions of England." 313 313 Fig. 8: Adolf Hitler during his reply speech on April 28, 1939 Hitler's Luftwaffe adjutant von Below writes about this Reichstag speech: "Hitler's Reichstag speech on April 28 was like a political explosion. Foreign Office officials chose the expression.....Widespread in Germany was the view that it had been one of Hitler's best speeches...In the small circle in the Reich Chancellery, Hitler expressed himself seriously and bitterly. It had become increasingly clear to him that the hostility of the Western democracies was not directed solely at the National Socialist government in Germany, but at the entire German people..... The cancellation of the treaties with Poland and England had an alarming effect on broad sections 53 of the people and on those around Hitler." 53 Thus Hitler poisoned the foreign policy climate with a series of explosive speeches that, while understandable from the perspective of the time, were politically damaging in the extreme. After all, Hitler had agreed to Roosevelt's 1933 disarmament proposals, but not the victorious states. After all, between 1919 and 1939, the United States had invaded Nicaragua, the Soviet Union had invaded Chinese Manchuria, and the Norwegians had invaded Danish Greenland. Finally, during this period, the Dutch had bloodily suppressed the freedom movement in Dutch India⁵⁴, the French had done the same in Morocco and in Syria 53 v. Below, pages 162 f 54 today Indonesia 314 and the British in India. And finally, England had divided Egypt Sudan and Ireland during those years against the will of the governments there. Thus, Hitler's complaints about British and American interference "on behalf of the peoples of the Western Hemisphere" are not entirely out of the air. Hitler's Lecture to the Commanders on February 10, 1939 Now let us catch up on the lecture Hitler gave to the Army troop commanders in Berlin on February 10, 1939⁵⁵. With this lecture, Hitler once again lifts the curtain that veils his intentions, a little bit, but without revealing any concrete plans. He repeats his idea of Lebensraum, but without revealing which territories he has in mind. He speaks of his concerns about Germany's food situation, about population growth, about maintaining the standard of living, about the shortage of grain, ores, wood, and he runs through the possible solutions: Increasing imports and exports, birth control, emigration, or adapting the

living space to the needs of the rapidly growing population. He rejects increased pressure on the world market because that was the underlying reason for the last war. Hitler ruled out birth control and emigration as viable solutions. Thus Hitler proclaims that he intends to "solve the German space problem." "It is not my aim, gentlemen, perhaps to wage a war, but my aim is to enforce the indispensable German demands and requirements of life, and to do so by all means, that is, to speak with Clausewitz, by the means of politics, ... and, if necessary, also with the means of the sword. Do not be surprised, therefore, if in the years to come, too, attempts will be made at every opportunity to achieve some German goal, and then, please, stand behind me in faithful confidence." 56 Hitler here reveals that he does not shrink from war, but he mentally leaves open a back door to hope for anyone who does not accept war as a means of politics that things will not come to the worst when he says: "But that is also what I am convinced is most likely to mitigate any such danger, to shorten the duration of wars, and above all, under certain circumstances, to avoid wars at all." 57 55 Federal Archives, Document NS 11/28 and Muller KJ, pages 365-375 56 Muller KJ, pages 374 f 57 Muller KJ, page 374 315 Thus, every Army commander listening now knows what moves Hitler beyond the revision of the Versailles Treaty. He also knows that for this purpose every means is justified to him, even war.

Every listening commander is warned from this point on. But Hitler again did not speak of "Lebensraum in the East", of Poland, Ukraine or the Soviet Union in this speech. Thus Hitler's speech remains an explosive political avowal rather than a concrete war plan. When, a good month later, the Czech Republic became a protectorate of the Reich and was annexed to the German economic area, some of the listeners on February 10 might believe that this was already the fulfillment of Hitler's Lebensraum idea. Hitler's Speech of May 23, 1939 and the Schmundt Minutes A good three months after that speech to the army commanders, Hitler again addresses the top leaders of the three branches of the Wehrmacht in a secret conference. This speech of May 23, 1939, is highly controversial in terms of its meaning and content. It is the second of the already mentioned "key speeches", with which the Nuremberg military tribunal tries to prove the accused generals and admirals their "joint planning of a war and conspiracy against peace" 58. The speech, it should be noted immediately, is not available as a verbatim record in this case either. Lieutenant Colonel Schmundt, Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutant at the time, wrote it down from memory sometime after the meeting. He notes on the first page of his transcript "reproduced mutatis mutandis," indicating that he did not follow Hitler's wording. Grand Admiral Raeder, confronted with the Schmundt transcript at the Nuremberg trial, says in court: "In my opinion, it is the most unclear document about a speech by Hitler that exists at all, because a large part of the remarks has, in my opinion, no sense at all. It does not at all correctly reflect the character of the speech, especially in this case." 59 We readers, however, have to rely on this single transcript concerning that Hitler speech. On May 23, 1939, Hitler summoned the Commanders-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht and their Chiefs of Staff to the Reich Chancellery to inform them of two things: first, that he wanted an extra study staff set up at his own disposal in the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW). This is to study for him the conditions to which wars will be subject in the future. And two 58 IMT Document 079-L/US-27 and Domarus, Vol. 2, pages 1196 ff 59 IMT Negotiations, Vol. XIV, pages 48 f 316 tenth he informs that he intends to eliminate Poland as a potential enemy in Germany's rear when the opportunity arises. To understand this speech, one must recall recent developments up to May 1939. In January, the German and Polish governments negotiate to reach a solution to the Corridor and Danzig questions. In March 1939, Hitler had the Czech Republic occupied as a protectorate of the German Reich. Poland, which had taken a piece of Czechoslovakia for itself in October 1938, now believes it no longer needs a settlement with the Germans and refuses to negotiate further on Danzig. Poland seizes the opportunity and switches to the camp of the British and French. At the same time, the oppression of the German minority in Poland revives. Since February, anti-German rallies have been

increasing in Poland's cities⁶⁰, and the large number of Polish attacks against Germans outrages the population in the Reich. German-Polish relations, which before the occupation of Czechoslovakia still gave cause for hope of understanding, now began to boil up. Hitler is obviously very angry about the opportunity he himself has blown and about this reaction of the Poles. He blames the Poles' refusal to negotiate further on Danzig on the British offer to protect Poland from the German Danzig demand. Thus, Hitler's anger at this time is directed primarily at the British and the Poles. On April 3, 1939, Hitler instructs the OKW to prepare a campaign against Poland in case Poland should toughen its attitude toward the German Reich. In this situation, Hitler informs the top generals of his view of the foreign policy situation and develops in a rather confused speech how Germany should proceed militarily. This speech – as it is "reproduced in the sense" – is aggressive like no other before the war. Several gruesomely martial passages from it are truly suitable for quotation, but whether they really came from Hitler in this way is not known. The speech does not reveal an overall concept for a new world war. But it reveals many things: first, that Hitler, in view of the rearmament of almost all states in Europe, considered a new war inevitable. Secondly, that in his opinion Germany needed more space for agriculture and mineral resources. Third, that he would attack Poland at a favorable opportunity and eliminate it as a potential adversary in Germany's rear, and fourth, that he hoped to escape wars with other states in Europe for a long time to come. Hitler gets specific on three points during this extensive speech. He wants his own study staff at the OKW. He wants to attack Poland "at the first suitable opportunity," and he wants to be ready for a major confrontation in Europe by 1943 or 1944. ⁶⁰ Contemporary Archives, Page 3962 317 The Lebensraum idea will not seem as absurd to the generals in 1939 as it does to the reader today. In the 1930s Italy and Japan were trying by force and Poland by negotiation⁶¹ to acquire colonies or colonial holdings in order to gain settlement space for their rapidly growing populations. The problem of living space, which England, France, the Soviet Union, the USA and others had long since solved for themselves with colonies or expansions at that time, is an issue among the colonial have-nots, not only in Germany. Back to Hitler's speech. The whole logic of this speech, as rewritten from memory by Schmundt, jumps back and forth somewhat. With somewhat traced order of thought and in Schmundt's words, Hitler develops the following chain of thought before the generals: – The victors would have established the balance of power in Europe without Germany. – The re-entry of Germany into the circle of power states would disturb this balance. – All German claims would be seen as an "intrusion". – England feared its economic endangerment. – Germany's economic problems had to be solved. – Colonies were not a solution to the food problem. The routes to them could be blocked by England on the seas. – Without invading foreign states or attacking foreign property, no solution to the economic problems was possible. – Germany would be left with the choice between ascent or descent. Then Hitler's thoughts jump to the role of Poland: – Poland would always be on the side of our enemies. Despite the friendship agreement, Poland had always intended to exploit every opportunity against us. – The problem of "Poland" could therefore not be separated from the confrontation with the West. – If fate forced us to confront the West, it would be good to have a large eastern area. – Gdansk was not the object in question. For us, it is a matter of expanding the living space in the East and securing food. – Therefore, the question of sparing Poland would be dropped, and the decision to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity would remain. – There must not be a simultaneous confrontation with France and England. – If it was not certain that England and France would remain uninvolved in a German-Polish confrontation, the fight would be primarily with the two countries mentioned. ⁶¹ Poland's Foreign Minister Beck recites this to the foreign press accredited in Warsaw on January 26, 1939. See Contemporary Archives, page 3905 318 Hitler's reflections on England and France now follow. – Hitler doubts the possibility of a peaceful confrontation with England. – England saw in Germany's development the foundation of a hegemony

which would disempower England. England was therefore our enemy and the confrontation with her was a matter of life and death. – It was not a question of right or wrong, but of being or not being. After this long chain of thoughts Hitler's speech begins to go round in circles. He says, – that the only way to deal England a decisive blow is not to slip into a war with England through Poland, and – that he hopes England and France will not interfere in a German-Polish war. – Thus as long as a raiding war to crush English possibilities on the mainland had to be prepared. So what, the listening generals must ask, does Hitler actually want? Lebensraum in the East, and if so, where should that be? War with England and France or war with Poland or both? In any case, he does not want war with England, France and Poland at the same time, and this deserves to be pointed out – he only wants to crush "England's possibilities on the mainland" and not to touch England's world empire. After the explanations of his strategic intentions, Hitler states that he now needs a study staff at the OKW to study the conditions for such wars. Hitler then goes on for a while about the work and the independence of the new staff from the general staffs of the three branches of the Wehrmacht. When Field Marshal Göring asked at the end of the meeting what the Wehrmacht units would have to do now and when war could be expected, Adolf Hitler answered only that the armament programs were to be set for 1943 or 1944⁶². This does not sound like an invasion

So much for Hitler's second "key speech", which he delivered on May 23, 1939, to the commanders-in-chief and the chiefs of staff of the army, the air force and the navy. The generals and admirals, according to what has been handed down, do not take away from the meeting the impression that Hitler is about to start a war. Even if the statement "to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity" conveys this, Hitler's final remark about a start of war in 1943 or 1944 cancels out this impression. ⁶² Domarus, Vol. 2, p. 1201–319 Seven weeks before the speech, Poland had refused a concession on the corridor and Danzig questions, and England had strengthened Poland in this by an offer of alliance. Since then, Hitler's instructions to the Wehrmacht in the event of "White" ⁶³ have been: "German relations with Poland continue to be governed by the principle of avoiding disturbances. Should Poland change its policy, which has hitherto been based on the same principle, and adopt an attitude threatening the Reich, a final settlement may become necessary.... The handling of the "White" case is to be carried out in such a way that its implementation is possible at any time from 1.9.1939." The generals and admirals consider a war to recover Danzig and the corridor in the summer of 1939 to be justified in principle. Nevertheless, all of them without exception prefer a negotiated solution of the problem because they see the further developments with France and with Great Britain. In the event of war with Poland and a victory of the Wehrmacht, the further retention of the former German provinces of Poznan and West Prussia by Poland or Germany would be a matter of high politics, according to the common view of the military at that time. In this context, it is not far-fetched to assume that these territories would be the "Lebensraum im Osten" (living space in the East), of which Hitler often spoke. However, no one obviously thought of an annexation of the whole of Poland in Hitler's speech of May 23. Hitler's mental excursion to the living space in the East in this speech is so little tangible and concrete that it subsequently has neither influence on the further Poland planning of the three parts of the Wehrmacht, nor does it give rise to further discussions. But in the weeks and months following the speech, the commanders-in-chief of the three branches of the Wehrmacht repeatedly warn Hitler not to misjudge England and France. But Hitler always reassures them that "he has things firmly in hand politically," ⁶⁴ that "he will not allow war to break out against England," or similar phrases to the same effect. The speech of May 23, 1939, is in parts confused and nebulous, but it shows Hitler's assumption that England will oppose the further strengthening of Germany with a war. Hitler develops from it his obsessive idea that war with England is inevitable, that he must further arm Germany for it, and that it might be advantageous to start the war with England itself. Poland was "only" the country that was now on the

wrong side and therefore had to be eliminated. This interpretation was confirmed within a quarter of a year, when shortly before the start of the war England held out the prospect of a treaty of partnership to Germany, and in return Hitler showed a willingness to call off the Polish campaign. But England does not honor the offer and so the war with Poland begins. This is the subject of the following chapter. 63 Hitler's directive of April 3, 1939. See dtv Hitler's directives, pages 19ff 64 Raeder, Vol. 2, page 163 320 The second key speech again reveals to the generals that Hitler is willing to wage war for the expansion of German Lebensraum. But he does not reveal when or how this will be. The reaction of the generals shows that they do not support Hitler in this kind of policy. Hitler's speech of August 22, 1939, and the seven protocols Hitler delivers the third key speech before the war on August 22, 1939, a good week before the outbreak of war. For this purpose, he summoned the leaders of the army groups and the armies of the three branches of the Wehrmacht to his Obersalzberg residence⁶⁵ in order to brief them on the foreign policy situation and to get them in the mood for the campaign against Poland. Since the beginning of 1939, Hitler has made no headway with his efforts on Danzig and the corridor. He has made offers of negotiation to Poland and in the end threatened war. At the beginning of the speech, the officers who have arrived at Obersalzberg do not know whether Hitler is really going to war over Danzig or whether he is bluffing. They can only speculate at the time. The day before Hitler's speech, there is a sensation. Stalin invites Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to Moscow to conclude treaties. Hitler can now count on an agreement with Russia that will assure him that the Soviet Union will not intervene in Poland's favor in the event of a German-Polish war.

In this new situation, a last-hour concession by the Polish government is not altogether improbable, especially since there is still a passable compromise proposal on the table from the German side. The great question hanging over that meeting at Obersalzberg is: agreement with Poland or war? The speech that Hitler gives in this tense situation could reveal whether he really wants war at any price at that time, or whether he is trying to wrest the German city of Danzig from Poland with the massive pressure of the threat of war. Even this large contingent of generals at Obersalzberg, which is not hidden from foreign countries, could serve to increase the pressure on Poland. Hitler begins the speech by declaring that he has now decided to wage war against Poland. But as talks between the Reich government and Poland continue, it is quite possible that these words, too, are only part of Hitler's threatening scenario. In the case of the Czech Republic, six months earlier, Hitler had achieved his goal simply by announcing his intention to invade. At that time, no shot had been fired. Thus, despite Hitler's unequivocal declaration, it remains open to the generals what will happen. ⁶⁵ Hitler's Residence Outside Berlin, Near Salzburg 321 The explosive nature of the speech lies in something else. This address to the generals is probably Hitler's most frequently quoted speech. There are no less than seven transcripts and minutes of it, some of which are very different from each other. All of them agree that Hitler gives detailed reasons for his decision to go to war against Poland. According to all the protocols, Hitler considers a confrontation with England and France to be inevitable in the long run. He believes that in such a case Poland would be on the side of the opposing powers and then at Germany's back. He therefore considers it better, in view of the present tense situation, to settle the conflict with Poland as soon as possible. Hitler explains his view of the situation of Great Britain and France and concludes that neither state will really take up arms in the event of an immediate German attack against Poland. In doing so, he also assesses the European leaders who could influence what happens. He concludes his speech with the thought that a quick German victory will help prevent the conflict from spreading. These are the few thoughts that are mentioned in all transcripts and minutes in a consistent manner. Now it is remarkable that in some of the transcripts Hitler's speech is written down in a vulgar manner and with the mention of far-reaching war aims, while in others it is expressed in a sober and factual manner, especially without the quotations that report Hitler's war intentions against France, England

and against the Soviet Union. This leaves open the question of which transcripts are correct. It may be that some of the minute-takers conceal important things in order to disguise them. It may also be that the others add to and fudge the speech so that the transcripts provide clearer "evidence" of Hitler's and the German generals' broad war intentions. If the "sharp" versions of the speech transcripts misrepresent, that would be fatal, because they and only they have entered the historiography. Since the Nuremberg Trials, they have shaped the image that people in Germany and in the world have of the early complicity of the German generals. Thus, what Adolf Hitler actually said on August 22, 1939, is of decisive importance for proving the generals' complicity or for exonerating them. The comparison of the transcripts is like a play from a detective novel. The seven transcripts of the Obersalzberg speech disappear in 1939 in the various files and reappear as "evidence" at the Nuremberg trials in 1945. First, the Nuremberg prosecution produces an alleged original document⁶⁶ that reproduces Hitler's remarks in particularly brutal, vulgar, and grotesque formulations. The "document" is leaked to U.S. Prosecutor Alderman by an American journalist⁶⁷. It is introduced into the 66 IMT Document 03-L/US-28 67 IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, Page 76 322 hearing, but then immediately rejected as evidence. The forgery is too obvious. This false version, not accepted by the court, shines with quotations and descriptions such as: "Decision to attack Poland in the spring...I will have anyone fusilized who utters even a word of criticism...The war aim is not to reach certain lines, but to physically destroy the enemy....Poland will be depopulated and populated with Germans...After Stalin's death we break the Soviet Union. Then German domination of the earth dawns." After the Falsch Version Hitler continues continues: "I am only worried that Chamberlain or some other bastard will come to me at the last moment with proposals and falling down. He flies down the stairs. And if I have to kick him in the stomach personally in front of all the photographers...I don't give a damn whether the world believes it. The citizens of Western Europe must tremble with horror....And now get at the enemy! In Warsaw we celebrate reunion! ... The speech was received with enthusiasm. Goering climbed up on the table. Bloodthirsty thanks and bloodthirsty promise. He danced around like a savage." ⁶⁸ So much for the first false version. What is fatal for defeated Germany is that the prosecuting authority, having rejected this vulgar and brutal "Wild West version" of Hitler's speech as a forgery for the taking of evidence, has it copied in 250 copies and distributed to the foreign press represented at Nuremberg. A propaganda coup by the victors against the vanquished. For the media all over the world, this is the "revelation" of how Hitler talks to the generals, and that he harbors plans for world conquest and has not concealed them⁶⁹. U.S. prosecutor Alderman calls this process, of which one can hardly believe that it is only an oversight, afterwards before the court laconically as "some technical mistake" ⁷⁰. As unworthy as this mistake is for the International Tribunal, as lasting is its effect on the historiography in Germany and the world. In the official documentation of British foreign policy, the "Documents on British Foreign Policy", for example, this and only this false version is perpetuated.⁷¹ Even today, quotations from that false version are used. Even the editors of the printed and published files of the Foreign Office are not too shy after the war to print the false version next to a second, also with doubts afflicted variant in the "Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik" and to keep it alive as a so-called document⁷². ⁶⁸ IMT Document 03-L/US-28 ⁶⁹ E.g. Neuer Hannoverscher Kurier, Nachrichtenblatt der Alliierten Militärregierung, Number 47 of November 27, 1945, pages 1 and 3 ⁷⁰ IMT Verhandlungen, Volume II, page 327 ⁷¹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Annex to Document 314 ⁷² ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, pages 171/172 323 The next transcript of this Hitler speech that the Court takes as evidence is a two-part document⁷³. It has neither head nor date, no file number, no diary number, no secret note, and it bears no signature. In court, no one can say who wrote it and where it came from⁷⁴. Later the prosecution representatives contradict themselves even with two different places of origin. The defender of the Grand Admiral Raeder, Dr. Siemers, draws the attention of the military tribunal to the

fact that the first half of this new document was written on the same paper and with the same typewriter as the first false version, which had already been withdrawn by the prosecutors⁷⁵. The court, however, does not allow this to cast doubt on the reliability and authenticity of the document and insists on the probative value of the paper. The explosive thing about this second document, as with the first, are the cynical statements and phrases allegedly from Hitler's mouth – which, if they were spoken in this way, severely compromise the listening generals. The second version is reprinted today in all authoritative history works and document volumes of Germany⁷⁶. School history and social studies books convey to pupils, with the most pithy quotations from this "document", that Hitler wanted war at any price with Poland, and that the German generals accepted this silently and approvingly. In the Archive of Hitler's Speeches by Archive Director Dr. Max Domarus, this second version is presented as the most literal reproduction of that speech and is printed in full. Domarus comments on this as follows: "There is no doubt about the authenticity, since two other transcripts of this speech exist: the record of General Admiral Her-77 mann Boehm and the diary entry of Generaloberst Halder". ⁷⁷ Here Domarus is mistaken, because it was General Admiral Boehm who exposed this second version as a forgery by comparing it with his own record. Generaladmiral Boehm is one of Adolf Hitler's listeners at Obersalzberg on August 22, 1939. He takes notes of the speech and records Hitler's key statements in their wording. That same evening, he uses the notes to write his minutes, which are number three in the order in which they are mentioned in this book. Boehm gives the protocol to his superior Raeder. He reads it, confirms it as correct and signs the paper. Six and a half years later, on May 16, 1946, in Nuremberg, when Raeder was to meet with the second ⁷³ IMT Documents 798-PS/US-29 (first half of speech) and 1014-PS/US-30 (second half of speech) ⁷⁴ IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, page 55 ⁷⁵ IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, page 55 ⁷⁶ exh. ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, pages 167 ff and Domarus, Volume 2, pages 1233 ff and Jacobsen, pages 98 ff ⁷⁷ Domarus, Volume 2, page 1233 ³²⁴ version of the said Hitler speech is confronted, he immediately says that many of the formulations in this "protocol" are not true. Words such as Raeder's "Destruction of Poland in the foreground. Goal is elimination of living forces, not achievement of a certain line" or "heart closed against compassion, brutal action" had not fallen⁷⁸. He claims that the German commanders-in-chief would not have put up with the mention of such a war aim at the beginning of the war. Raeder recalls the Boehm protocol and demands that the Admiral General be heard as a witness. Raeder's lawyer, Dr. Siemers, makes a motion to subpoena Boehm as a witness. The judges refuse. Dr. Siemers then interrogates Boehm, prepares a transcript of the interrogation and has the admiral general make an affidavit. Siemers then submits both the interrogation transcript and the affidavit to the Nuremberg court as the exoneration document "Raeder No. 129"⁷⁹. It is interesting to note that Boehm's hearing is listed in the minutes of the court hearing with the date, subject matter and document number, but does not appear in the document volume of the IMT. It is missing. The Nuremberg judges avoided including the dismantling of their "key speech" as evidence on record. However, the very revealing hearing of the Admiral General has been preserved in its entirety in the estate of Raeder's defense counsel, Dr. Siemers. It is worthwhile to read it. Boehm compares the second version challenged by Raeder with his own transcript and states for the record: "I declare under oath that the phrases listed below in these documents were partly not used at all by Hitler in his speech, partly in a different form and in a different sense." Then, piece by piece, he goes through the explosive passages in the challenged "evidence." The alleged Hitler quotes are introduced in the following with "2. Ver-80 sion", the statements of the witness with "Boehm "80. 2nd version: "I took the decision already in spring, but thought that I would first turn against the West in a few years and only then against the East." Boehm: "In particular, the phrase that Hitler would first turn against the West, which would thus have expressed an intention to attack the Western powers, was not used in any case." 2nd version: "I wanted first to establish a

workable relationship with Poland, in order first to fight against the West." Boehm: "The sentence has not been needed. The same applies as stated before, that Hitler in no case expressed an intention to fight against the West." 78 IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, page 56 79 Siemers, Document Book VI, pages 3 ff 80 Siemers, Document Book VI, pages 3-10, Document Raeder-129 325 2nd version: "We have nothing to lose, only to gain." Boehm: "The sentence was not needed. " 2nd version: "The opponents did not reckon with my great decisiveness. Our opponents are little worms. I saw them in Munich." Boehm: "Both sentences, especially the assessment of the opponents, were not needed." 2nd version: "I'm just afraid that at the last moment some bastard will present me with a mediation proposal. The political objective continues. Beginning to destroy the supremacy of England is made." Boehm: "Neither the sentence regarding the mediation proposal, nor especially regarding the destruction of the supremacy of England has been spoken. They are outright inventions, as is the word "swine."" 2nd version: "Destruction of Poland in the foreground. Goal is elimination of living forces, not achievement of a particular line. " Boehm: "It has never been spoken of the annihilation of Poland or the elimination of the living forces of the Polish people as such, but always only of the breaking of the military forces." 2nd version: "Residual destruction of Poland is the military goal" Boehm: "The sentence has certainly not been spoken." 2nd version: "Closing heart against compassion" "Brutal action ". Boehm: "No brutal action has ever been called for in Hitler's speech. The call for toughness referred in wording and sense to the conduct of the battle as well against the enemy Wehrmacht, as in the use of one's own troops for the quickest termination of the conflict." 2nd version: "New German border command according to healthy points of view, possibly protectorate as advance area." Boehm: "There has been talk only of a later new border demarcation, not of a protectorate." And so on and so forth. The Admiral General concludes his affidavit before Grand Admiral Raeder's counsel, Dr. Siemers, with the summary remark that he considers the "particularly incriminating passages to be subsequent additions or errors." Boehm's own transcript, the third speech transcript in the count of this book, begins with "Purpose of the debate ... 326 intention (of Hitler⁸¹) as late as the spring was to postpone the solution of the Polish question, to put it on ice, so to speak, in order to wait until the confrontation in the West, which in his opinion was inevitable, was settled. However, as a politician, one must not commit oneself to a time sequence, one must be elastic. The preconditions for his original intentions had changed; moreover, he had never believed that Poland would have kept to the non-aggression pact if Germany had been bound in any other way..... If this confrontation with Poland was undesirable, it was necessary, and the political situation for Germany was more favorable now than perhaps in a few years." 82 According to Boehm's transcript, in this speech Hitler explains his motives for an early war against Poland. After introductory considerations of the present situation of the British Empire, France, Italy, and Spain, he comes to Poland: "It is clear, first of all, that a political situation with Poland as it now existed is intolerable in the long run. Hence the Fuehrer's proposal concerning the cession of Danzig and the establishment of a connecting route through the corridor. This attempt at understanding was disturbed by England, which got into a hysteria and caused Poland to issue insolent notes and take military measures..... For England, however, it was and is precisely a permanent unstable condition that is desired, so that at any time, if it wants to strike out on its own, it can let go of Poland on the other side..... To be rejected would be lazy compromises..... In the opinion of the Fuehrer, the probability of the Western powers intervening in a conflict is not great." Then, according to Boehm's minutes, Hitler explains why he does not expect the Western powers to intervene, and why the Soviet Union has so suddenly turned away from England and France and toward Germany in this German-Polish dispute. Boehm's minutes continue, "Naturally, in a conflict Germany Poland, the Western powers will try to save face. They will perhaps recall the ambassadors, perhaps set up a trade embargo. Only the most iron determination will help against this.

Incidentally, one must remember. There are people on the other side, too, with their worries and concerns. At the end of the day, it's not machines that are wrestling with each other, but people. And we have the better people.... The goal is the elimination and crushing of Poland's military forces.... 81 Author's Note 82 IMT Minutes Volume XLI, Document Raeder-27 327 Providence has made us leaders of this (German⁸³) people; we thus have the task of giving the necessary living space to the German people, who are crowded together with 140 people per square kilometer...." Not a single word is to be read in Boehm of Hitler's plans to attack France or England himself later, of the "complete destruction of Poland" or even of a "German domination of the earth" (in 1st version). Of particular importance is the Hitler quote from the second version, of which it is not known who wrote it: "I am only afraid that at the last moment some bastard will present me with a mediation plan. 84 This quote still haunts school history and civics textbooks⁸⁵ today, as it proves that Hitler now wants war at any price with Poland and is no longer interested in a solution to the corridor and Danzig questions. In the first false version, the "Schweinehund" is still called "Saukerl. Neither in Boehm, nor in Halder or Greiner (5th version) is this momentous sentence to be found. In Boehm it says instead, "To reject would be lazy compromises." The Schweinehund formulation in question is significant because Hitler asked the British government to mediate with the Poles on the following day, August 23, 1939, as well as on August 25, 26, and 29. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. In 1946 at Nuremberg, the Schweinehund formulation was intended to prove that Hitler's requests for mediation with the British government were only a sham. This may also be the reason why the Nuremberg judges refuse to summon Boehm as a witness. Archive director Dr. Domarus decides to include the 2nd version, whose author and origin are unknown, in the archive of Hitler speeches and not the Boehm version. He justifies it "because they are more concisely worded than those of Boehm and Halder, although they have the same content." 86 Domarus has obviously been blinded precisely by the "concise" but dubious formulations, and he makes use of two witnesses, of all people, who refute his logic. Neither Boehm with his own protocol nor the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Halder, with his diary entry (4th version)⁸⁷ confirm the many compromising formulations attributed to Hitler with that second protocol version at Nuremberg. 83 Author's note 84 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, page 170 85 E.g.: Gebhardt, Vol. 4/2, page 499 86 Domarus, Vol. 2, page 1233 87 ADAP, Series D, Vol. VII, pages 467 ff and Halder, Vol. 1, pages 23ff 328 Another protocol, the fifth in the count of this book, is in the Kriegstagebuch des OK W 88, written by the leader of this diary Helmuth Greiner. This log confirms Boehm in almost all of his points. It corrects the admiral only to the effect that Hitler obviously did speak of a destruction of England's supremacy, but not as Hitler's political program as suggested in the 2nd version, but only as a mention of a fact. And Greiner confirms that Hitler did talk about possibly making Poland a protectorate. Generalfeldmarschall von Manstein, a listener to this Hitler speech, also writes later that Hitler did not use many of the phrases attributed to him at the time⁸⁹. Grand Admiral Raeder testifies at Nuremberg, "The words were certainly not uttered according to my recollection. The Führer was not in the habit of using such expressions in speeches he delivered to the generals." 90 The same is confirmed by Field Marshal General Keitel⁹¹. In addition to the already mentioned five versions of transcripts of this explosive and often quoted Hitler speech, a sixth version by General Liebmann and a seventh version by General Admiral Albrecht have survived. The two versions are not reproductions of the wording. The supposed proof of authenticity by Domarus is consequently no proof. The second version printed in the files of the German Foreign Office and in the Domarus archives, of which nobody knows by whom it originates, is obviously just as much a forgery as the first one. In view of Dr. Siemer's observation that the questionable document was partly written on the same typewriter as the first false version, it may well have come from the same forger who wrote the first "vulgar" version. The second version serves as "proof" in Nuremberg that on that

August 22, 1939, Hitler informed the General Staff that he was conducting negotiations with Poland only as a pretense, that he wanted war and land conquest at any cost, and that he intended to attack Britain and France later. When Hitler gathered the army group and army commanders of the three branches of the Wehrmacht at his Alpine residence, Obersalzberg, on that August 22, the senior officers knew that negotiations with Poland over Danzig and the corridor had been going on since January. They are aware of the tensions with France and Britain which Hitler himself caused by the subjugation of Czechoslovakia in March. They are aware of the countless attacks against the German 88 KTB-OKW, Document Appendix, page 947 89 v. Manstein, page 19 90 IMT Negotiations, Volume XIV, page 59 91 Keitel, page 247 329 minority in Poland, of the many border violations by Poland, and they know that German divisions are marching against Poland. In this situation, the generals and admirals expect intelligence about what awaits them. If one takes the transcripts of Greiner, Boehm, and Halder as a basis, Hitler opens up to the generals on that August 22, 1939, neither more nor less than that he now wants to act militarily shortly after months of fruitless negotiations with Poland. It is true that he conceals his own mistake, which he committed six months ago with the occupation of the Czech Republic and with which he himself caused Poland's stiff attitude. But the speech holds nothing that might surprise the generals in such a situation of tension. At least they hear nothing about further plans of Hitler to attack later France, England, Russia or whoever. If this is so, and there is little doubt about it, then the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, with its two distorted speech transcripts, was not looking for the truth but for incriminating material. And the court has left us and the German students a dubious legacy. The "pithy" quotes from the 2nd version persist to this day in school history and social studies textbooks⁹². Complicity and complicity of the German people The overall view of all Hitler's interviews and speeches between 1933 and the beginning of the war against Poland shows an initially diffuse picture. There are the public speeches in which Hitler promotes peace in Europe until the outbreak of war, and there are the secret speeches to closed circles - mostly to high officers - in which he lets it be known that he is prepared to risk war. Hitler obviously deceives foreign countries and the German people with his peace speeches, and the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg deceives foreign countries and the German people about the true content of Hitler's secret speeches. Thus, in retrospect, it is not easy to tell whether Hitler initially risked only a war for the return of Danzig and the Corridor, whether he considered a later confrontation with the Western powers inevitable and was preparing for it, or whether he himself wanted to start a war for German expansion. All postwar interpretations about the "German living space in the East" do not help. Hitler does not mention in any of his speeches, even in those after the opening of the war on September 1, on October 6 and on No. 23, 92 e.g. in "Unsere Geschichte" Vol. 4, page 128 quoted as Diesterweg 1988 and in "Geschichte und Geschehen 10" Ausg. N, page 133 cited as Klett 1995 and in "Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte" vol. 4/2, page 499 cited as Gebhardt and in "Der Mensch gegen den Mensch", page 40, book for schools in Lower Saxony cited as Nolte 330 vember 1939 not where for him the often mentioned living space in the East. The listening generals, admirals and ministers could assume him in the respective next "target", in Austria, in Bohemia and Moravia or in the former German parts of Poland. Hitler never mentioned Ukraine, the later target of conquest, until July 1940⁹³. Thus, the obvious doctoring of Hitler's secret speeches with formulations about attack intentions against Great Britain and France or about the desired "domination of the earth" did more harm than good to the search for truth. In the late summer of 1939, the German public had no reason to conclude from Hitler's speeches anything more than a war over Danzig and the Corridor. After Hitler's hand-strikes and threatening successes in the Rhineland in 1936, in Austria and the Sudetenland in 1938, and in the Czech Republic in 1939, they may even hope that Danzig, too, will return to the German Reich without war. The preceding breaches of promise, with which Hitler belied his earlier promises such as

"we don't want any Czechs at all," the German public apparently put away just as it usually does with broken political promises. They do not see this as a portent. Thus, the German people cannot infer from Hitler's speeches until 1939 that their "Führer" will lead them into a war for "living space in the East" at a later time. Hitler did not let the German people as a whole look into his cards with his public speeches. Thus, the German people as a whole can also not be attributed connivance and a collective guilt. The Reich ministers and the top generals could not have observed Hitler's latent willingness to use the Wehrmacht for anything other than the defense of Germany until 1937. The only hint of Hitler's later ambitions comes from his inaugural speech to the Reichswehr on February 3, 1933, where the newly inaugurated Chancellor Hitler mentions at one point that Germany might need "living space in the East." After that, this is no longer an issue for a long time. This was followed by the construction of fortifications on the eastern border, the occupation of the Rhineland, which until then had been unprotected by German troops, and the construction of the Westwall. Even the reconstruction of the Wehrmacht in the first years of Hitler's reign was initially oriented only to the armaments advantage of France and Germany's neighboring states allied with France. All this is no reason to fear wars of conquest under Hitler's government. Nevertheless, there are men in business, politics and the military who see the introduction of compulsory military service, the rearmament and the occupation of the Rhineland as the harbingers of a war policy and express it in this way⁹⁴.⁹³ Even then, Hitler still speaks of his own "Ukrainian Reich."⁹⁴ Bross, page 84 331 The first clear indication in a speech is found only in Hitler's discussion with Foreign Minister von Neurath and the Wehrmacht top brass on November 5, 1937, recorded by Colonel Hoßbach. Hitler lets it be known that he wants to use the "chances" of future wars of the large European states with each other for Germany, and that he wants to annex Austria and the Czech Republic to the German Reich. This is not the forging of a war plan, as the Nuremberg Tribunal later accuses him of doing. The objections of Neurath and the generals only prove the opposite. But Hitler lets the mask fall for the first time. Von Neurath draws the consequence and asks to leave. The generals feel obliged to the primacy of politics and try to dissuade Hitler from adventures with their advice. It only comes to the conspiracy of seven army generals already mentioned in Part 2 of the book, which does not have any effect because the Munich Agreement prevents an attack against the Czech Republic. In the three speeches to commanders and commanding officers on February 10, 1939, and May 23 (2nd Key Speech) and August 22 (3rd Key Speech), Hitler tries to motivate the Führer Corps of the Wehrmacht to go to war. He speaks of expanding the Lebensraum and makes it clear that he considers a major war inevitable from 1943. But Hitler never reveals what he really means by the expansion of Lebensraum. Each of his speeches, when it becomes concrete, only lifts the small piece of the veil that lies on the very next step. That is first Austria, then the Czech Republic, then Poland. Hitler never completely let himself be seen in the cards. Judging from his speeches and interviews, it is also likely that concrete plans beyond his nebulous visions came to him only with the early successes of the war and as opportunities presented themselves.⁹⁵ To all appearances, Hitler's cynical and brutal phrases and some declarations of intent came from foreign pens that wanted to serve the Nuremberg court with striking evidence. The generals obviously did not hear and did not know these later modified

texts in 1939. The ideas of the Wehrmacht officers in 1939 revolve around what they can hear at the time and what they can see. They observe the dramatically escalating tensions between the German Reich and Poland beginning in April 1939. Their complicity in the outbreak of a new world war must be judged by what they know, observe and hear in 1939. Thus, the long road into the German-Polish-Russian confrontation is more decisive for their complicity or innocence than Hitler's so-called key speeches.⁹⁵ Hitler denies this in later speeches and claims to have planned his actions from a long hand.

332 PART 5 THE WAY INTO THE GERMAN-POLISH-SOVIET WAR The Way Into the

German-Polish-Soviet War Poland at odds with all its neighbors The Polish self-image Polish-Soviet disputes Polish-Lithuanian disputes Polish-Czech disputes Polish-German disputes Province of Posen Province of West Prussia-. Pomerelia Gdansk Eastern Upper Silesia Poland as a multiethnic state Catholicization White Russians Ukrainians Jews Kashubs Germans Germany's basic attitude toward Poland Poland's military mind games Poland's alliance policy Relationship Poland France Relationship Poland England Relationship Poland Soviet Union Relationship Poland Czechoslovakia Relationship Poland Germany Poland and the Kellogg Pact Pact The Balance Sheet 333 Hitler's Plans for Poland Roosevelt's Role in the Dispute over Danzig The Soviet Union's Relationship with Germany Poland's Reinsurance with France Before the War Began Poland's Reinsurance with England Before the War Began The Failed British-French-Soviet Rapprochement The German-Soviet Understanding The Vatican's Attempt at Mediation The Intensification of the Situation in Danzig and in Poland Public Opinion in the German Reich on Danzig, War and Poland Poland's self-assessment on the eve of war The last mediation proposals The last week before war Wednesday, August 23. August Thursday, August 24 Friday, August 25 Saturday, August 26 Sunday, August 27 Monday, August 28 Tuesday, August 29 Wednesday, August 30 Thursday, August 31 The Outbreak of War 334 THE WAY INTO THE GERMAN-POLISH-SOVIET WAR Poland at odds with all its neighbors The Polish drama of 1939 has been brewing ominously since 1918 in what was only a brief but turbulent prehistory. The difficult reorganization of the territorial demarcation between the resurrected Poland and its neighbors is prefigured in January 1918 by the President of the USA Wilson. In point 13 of his 14-point peace offer, he demands that the states of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, which had lost in the war, establish a new state of Poland. Point 13 reads: "An independent Polish state shall be established, which shall comprise the territories inhabited by an indisputably Polish population, which shall be guaranteed free and safe access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial inviolability shall be guaranteed by international agreements.

1 The ambiguous formulations in this demand create a tremendous explosive force in all subsequent territorial and border regulations that will apply to Poland and all her neighbors. The words "indisputably Polish population" create an expectation among Poles that every tract of land on which Poles live will become Polish in the future. In Russia, Austria, Lithuania, and Germany, people tend to think of the territories where Poles form a majority. Wilson, too, obviously thought of Polish majorities when he said "indisputably Polish population". Only in this way does his speech of July 4, 1918, at Mount Vernon make sense, in which he promises "popular participation for the settlement of any territorial, sovereignty, economic, and political problems, eliminating all foreign power interests in each case." promises. Among the defeated peoples, it generates bitterness from 1920 on that this right of self-determination of the peoples promised by America in the treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain is not respected. In the case of Danzig and the "Corridor", the permanent breach of the right to self-determination triggers the Second World War. The second formulation, which contains inflammatory material, lies in the words about "free and safe access to the sea". At first, Wilson was only thinking of mere rights of way, such as those granted to the new Czechoslovakia on the Elbe. But this is not at all clear to the states which at Versailles are struc 1 Kern, Page 27 335 turing the new Poland. They make of it the whole territory of Pomerelia, including the city of Danzig. The Wilson formulation, interpreted in this way, induces the government of Poland two decades later to take a stiff stance on the Danzig question. Since Germany guarantees this free access also outside Danzig from 1938, both the Poles and the Germans invoke point 13 of the Wilson points in 1939 and go to war with it; both conscious of being right. The newly founded state of Poland is granted land and people from the stock of neighboring nations by the victorious powers of the First World War. Among them are many millions of people who are not Poles and do not want to become Poles. Map 17: Poland after Versailles

and Saint-Germain 336 Nevertheless, the Poles are not satisfied with their land gains. Dmowski, the head of the Polish delegation at Versailles, declares during the negotiations on Poland's new borders that one should not lose sight of the fact that the territories granted to the state of Poland "are only a down payment on a real Greater Poland."² The newly inaugurated Polish government demands for its new state all the territories that had been parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Union before 1772.³ It does not matter to them that Poland ruled over many foreign peoples at the time. Even after the founding of the state, the issue of "Polish territories" remained topical for the Poles for a long time. The later Deputy Prime Minister Grabski wrote in 1923, when he chaired the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the Parliament in Warsaw: "... Above all, there still exists for the power policy of Poland the same fundamental dilemma which weighs on our whole history up to now, namely, the question: which direction should the expansion of the Polish people take? The northern one towards the Baltic Sea or the southeastern one towards Ukraine and the Black Sea?... Either we direct the Polish expansion of power eastward against Russia, taking advantage of the period of her powerlessness which the next half century will bring her ... or else we shall use all the power at our disposal to see that the East Prussian question is decided by Poland in the interests of Poland.....In modern history there is no example of a nation having renounced any of its constituent parts merely because they were at that time still outside its national boundaries." ⁴ The new Poland, barely founded in 1918 from the former German, Austrian, Hungarian, and Russian World War soldiers of Polish nationality, raises a strong army and begins to expand aggressively in three cardinal directions to the detriment of its neighbors. Thus, the conflicts of the next 20 years are marked out. The Polish self-image Poland's history covers a period of almost one thousand years, during which the Polish people grew from a small Slavic tribe to a kingdom, and in half of this time to a great empire and ruler over many foreign peoples. The second half of Polish history is the path of internal disintegration, the conquest of the non-Polish populated areas of Poland by Russians and Ottomans and finally the "three Polish partitions", the division of the country between Russia, Austria and Prussia, which end Poland's independence ² Kendziora, page 6 ³ Halecki, page 223 ⁴ Fuchs, pages 76 f 337 from 1795. It was not until 1917 that Austria and Germany founded a new Poland from "their" parts of Poland. From this thousand-year history, two historical memories dominate the collective memory of Poles and their political consciousness. These are the reminiscences of the "splendor" of the old Great Empire, which suggest to Poles that this country is Polish to its fullest extent. The second are the memories of the "misery" of the three partitions, which still live on in the self-confidence of Poles today as the guilt of the Russians, Austrians and Germans against their people. This glamor and misery continue to affect the self-image of the elites and the people in Poland in 1918 and thereafter. According to the understanding of Polish historiography, the struggle of the small nation of Poles against their Slavic neighbors forms the beginning of a first kingdom. From the temporary subjugation of these neighboring Slavs, for example the Masurians in East Prussia and the Silesians, the Polish government in 1918 derived its legal view that their lands were original Polish territories. The advance of German rule and settlement from the year 963 across the Elbe into the then Slavic-populated areas lives on in Polish historiography to this day as Germany's first attack against Poland.⁵ King Boleslaw Chrobry extends Poland's rule westward for a short time until 1025. In the process, Lusatia becomes Polish from 1018 to 1031, and so does Bohemia from 1003 to 1004 and Moravia from 1003 to 1029, as does Silesia and, for a brief period, Slovakia. In 1386 the Polish princess Jadwiga married the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jagiello. Now their two kingdoms grow together to form the Polish-Lithuanian Personal Union. The Poles contributed a good quarter to this union, the Lithuanians with Belarus, Ukraine, Volhynia and Podolia the remaining three quarters. With the union, Poland's share of power grows into a wide area to the east, as far as shortly before Moscow and Kursk.⁶ The Lithuanian

part is later extended to the north to the edge of the German Memelland and to the south to the Black Sea. Parts of it in the east and in the south,

however, come into Russian and Ottoman possession even before the First Polish Partition. In 1569, the personal union of the two states becomes a real union, and the large Lithuania becomes a part of the until then much smaller Poland. In 1918, the Poles claim this annexed Great Lithuania as their inheritance in Versailles. Thus, the Polish conquests of Eastern Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine around 1920 also date back to that Great Lithuanian period. According to Polish understanding, these are lands that Tsarist Russia later took from them 5 Halecki, page 19 6 Putzgers, page 37 338 Map 18: The Polish-Lithuanian Union before the First Polish Partition in the "Three Polish Partitions". Nevertheless, the lands annexed by Poland in 1920 in the East are, historically speaking, rather an "inherited part" of the small Baltic state of Lithuania. Poland's claims to Belarusian and Ukrainian territories with reference to the Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1386 are therefore as unconvincing to the Soviet Union in 1920, given the passage of time and the mediocrity of the reasons for the claims, as would have been a claim by the Danes to Norway and Sweden in 1920 with recourse to the Kalmar Union of 1387. In 1410 the Teutonic Order is defeated by a Polish-Lithuanian army in the Battle of Tannenberg, which is called the Battle of Grunwald among the Poles. This marks the beginning of the decline of the Order's power in northeastern Europe in 1339. As a result, in 1466 Pomerelia and Warmia came directly to Poland, and in addition East Prussia came under Poland's fief, as a suzerainty was called at that time. The Polish fief over East Prussia ends in 1657, but Pomerellen and Erm-land with their German and Kashubian population now belong to the Kingdom of Poland for a good 300 years. They come only with the 1st Polish partition in 1772 again under German rule. This explains Poland's claim to the parts of the country that were German in the German view in 1918 and thereafter. In the 1st partition Poland also loses Galicia with a half Polish, half Ukrainian population to Austria. In the 2nd and 3rd partition in 1793 and 1795 the heartland of Poland is divided. This is still a pain for every Pole today. Poles remember the three partitions as the loss of their own country, even though more than half of the divided land was colonies rather than actual Polish land. Thus, the second half of Poland's thousand-year history is first the shrinking to the heartland and only then the fall of free Poland. Polish-Soviet disputes

In the east and in the north, the dispute is over territories that belonged to the Greater Lithuanian part of the Empire at the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Dual Monarchy. In 1918 they were located in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. When, after the end of World War I, German army forces are withdrawn from the Baltic States and western Russia, Soviet troops advance as far as Lithuania in the north and as far as the Bug River in Ukraine. As a result, in the spring of 1919 Poland attacks the Soviet Union, which has been weakened by the revolution, and Lithuania, which is now independent. It conquered Vilnius and pushed Soviet troops back as far as Belarus and Ukraine.⁷ In December 1919, Poland's founding powers intervened. The "Supreme Allied Council" of the victorious powers in Versailles designates the national border between Poland in the west and the Belarusians and Ukrainians in the east as the eastern border of the new state of Poland. The border now runs from north to south from Grodno through Brest-Litovsk and then along the Bug River. It is named after the man who proposed it, British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon. After the Council's partition ruling, the Soviets demand the handover of the parts of Belarus and Ukraine awarded to them on their side of that Curzon Line. Poland refuses to hand over the newly conquered "Eastern Poland". This is followed by a buildup of Soviet army forces toward Poland. Poland does a like eastward and attacks Russia without a declaration of war ⁷ The dates and facts for the following account of the Polish-Soviet and Polish-Lithuanian clashes are taken from the U.S. Encyclopedia of Military History by Dupuy and Dupuy, pages 991 ff 340 Map 19:1919 Poland's attack against Russia. The fighting waved back and forth for half a year. In May 1920, Poland's forces conquer Ukraine as far south as Kiev. In July, the Soviet army gains

the upper hand. It manages to drive the army of the Poles back to the gates of Warsaw. In the Battle of Warsaw the tide turns again, the Poles win and drive the Russians eastward to Minsk in Belarus. The Russian Red Army is all but annihilated in the process. 341 Map 20: The CURZON Line The Soviets must make peace. On March 18, 1921, in the Peace of Riga, Russia renounces the "Eastern Poland" on its side of the Curzon Line. It thus loses 5 million Ukrainians, 1.2 million White Russians and about 1 million Jews as citizens of its country. Poland gains with "Eastern Poland" also the about 1.5 million Poles living there. With the territory now added, Poland's new national border is 250 kilometers inside the Russian-speaking area. 342 parts of the Soviet Union that belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Empire before 1772! Soviet Attacks in July-August 1920 Map 21: Soviet Attack to the Gates of Warsaw The Peace of Riga has a couple of consequences that are reasons for the later demise of the new Poland. First, the Soviet Union retains a legitimate reason for a later revision at Poland's expense. In 1939 it will recapture exactly the now lost territory up to the Curzon Line that the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victorious powers awarded to it in 1919. In 1945 she will also chase out of the country the 2 million Poles who live there in the meantime. In return, 15 million Germans will have to leave their homes in Silesia, West and East Prussia, Danzig, East Brandenburg, Wartheland and Pomerania. Second, Poland buys in large minorities that it will not be able to integrate in the years to come. And thirdly, the victory of the relatively small Poland against the huge Soviet Union tempts the Polish people to a captious overconfidence. From now on, the Polish people and with them the army believe that they can beat the big neighboring states militarily. Thus, even in 1939, they see no reason to negotiate instead of war. Furthermore, the war of the Poles and the Soviets has consequences for the future dealings of the peoples in Europe. The post-war powers, represented by the "Supreme Allied Council", accept without consequences that a militarily strong state disregards a border drawn by them. They accept the attack of a state without a declaration of war. They ignore the right of self-determination of a few million people in Eastern Europe. They bow to the power of the facts that a country has created with its military. This does not remain without a lasting impression on the people of the defeated countries of the Soviet Union and Germany, who later do the same. Polish-Lithuanian disputes The second country Poland touches is Lithuania, independent since 1918. At first Russia does not want to recognize the independence of the new state and occupies the capital Vilnius with the surrounding countryside. But the Poles consider the disputed territory to be Polish. Vilnius has a large Polish population, the surrounding area is purely Lithuanian. When the Soviet Union has other concerns in the war with Poland, it recognizes the independence of the Lithuanian state in July 1920 and withdraws its troops. Poland then occupies the capital Vilnius with the surrounding countryside in October 1920. The League of Nations in Geneva objects in vain and proposes a referendum. Poland does not grant the population in the conquered territory the right to national self-determination and retains the east of the still young Lithuanian state without allowing a referendum. In 1938 Poland deploys troops on the border, threatens war and forces the Lithuanians to recognize the Polish conquest of 1920 under international law. This war of 1920 and the threat of war in 1938 also have an indirect influence on the subsequent dealings of the states in Europe with each other. First, the League of Nations loses importance as a forum because it ultimately looks on powerlessly as a member country breaks the peace. And second, Poland cites minority rights and historical ties as legitimation for its wars. In Vilnius and its environs, Poles are a minority and their rights from the former Polish-Lithuanian Union are now 125 years suspended. This is so, even though the Union had previously lasted 400 years. With exactly the same false legitimation Hitler annexed the rest³⁴⁴ of Czechoslovakia in 1939 and Stalin the three Baltic states in 1940. The German people accepts this unjust act of their own government against the Czech Republic 18 years later without resistance, not least because such aggressions in Europe after 1918 are almost the order of the day here in Lithuania and elsewhere and are accepted by the victorious powers

without serious objection. Such injustice is thus no longer at all unusual for the German people in 1939. Polish-Czech Disputes The third state from which Poland demands land is Czechoslovakia. In 1918, Poles and Czechs alike claimed the Teschen region, a territory about 60 by 50 kilometers in area south of Upper Silesia. Map 22: The Teschen Region as a part of Austria between the state borders of 1918 In the literature, the small country is sometimes called the Teschen Region after the town of Teschen, sometimes the Olsa Region after the Olsa River that crosses it. The majority of the population is made up of Slonzaks, an independent small Slavic people with their own identity, similar to the Sorbs in German Lusatia. Otherwise, Germans, Poles and Czechs live in and around Teschen.⁸ The importance of

the Teschen area results from three factors. The first lies in the area's wealth of coal mines, steel mills, and a substantial 800,000 Poles, Poland and Europe, page 18 345 portion of Czech heavy industry. The second arises from geographical conditions. On the northern edge of the area the Odra River, flowing through the Moravian Gate, breaks through a chain of mountains. The state in possession of the gate dominates a gateway to its neighboring country. The third factor is related to this. In the Moravian Gate lies the town of Oderberg with one of the most important railroad junctions in East-Central Europe. At the Paris negotiations on the post-war territorial order, Poland, with the help of France, succeeds in having the eastern part of the Teschen region awarded to it. After disputes between the Czechs and the Poles, the "Supreme Allied Council" again divides the small country between the two opponents. But Poland does not want to accept the division. It claims that the population in the western part, which remains with the Czechs, is Polish. However, as the Poles do not mention, 150,000 people of other nationalities live there in addition to 80,000 Poles.⁹ The second pillar of the Polish justification is based on historical claims as the Poles see them. From 1290 to 1653, Piast dukes of Polish origin ruled the small principality of Teschen, but it became part of the Kingdom of Bohemia as early as 1292. Since then, the connection of Teschen to Poland exists only in a wide kinship of the ruling houses of both countries. The dukes in Teschen belong to a side line of the Polish Piast kings, who died out already in 1370. In 1625 the Teschen line of the Piasts also died out with its last scion, Duke Frederick William. In 1653 the Bohemian king gave the orphaned fiefdom of Teschen to a Saxon prince¹⁰. Thus, to illustrate it by a historical parallel, in 1918 the Teschen region is no more Polish than Tuscany is German. So much for the legitimation of the Poles. In 1938, during the Sudeten crisis, Poland takes up the Teschen question again. At that time the German government demands

demanded that the Czech government in Prague hand over the Sudetenland, which was predominantly populated by Germans. Warsaw considers its own demand for Western Teschen as justified as the German demand for the Sudeten. After England and France initially recognized the Poles' claim, they ultimately rejected it because they feared the complete disintegration of the Czechoslovak multiethnic state as a consequence. Thus, the British, the French, and with them the Soviets reject the Poles' claim to West Teschen. The Soviet Union even threatened serious consequences. Moscow and Prague concluded a mutual assistance pact in May 1935. Thus, the Soviets warn the Poles not to encroach on Teschen and threaten otherwise to terminate the Polish-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of July 1932. The 9 Burneleit, page 21 10 Meyers Konversationslexikon on Teschen 346 reaction from Germany was different. On September 20, 1938, Polish Ambassador Lipski in Berlin asked Hitler if there were any reservations on the part of Germany about a Polish annexation of the western Teschen area. Hitler and his Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop raise no objections to protect the Czechs. Hitler, however, expresses the hope that in return the German city of Danzig, which is still under a League of Nations mandate, can be united with the German Reich.¹¹ This is discussed later in the book. In the last week of September 1938, Poland deployed an army corps near Teschen and threatened the Czech government with war. Czechoslovakia, at that time unable to act anyway, gave in, and Poland occupied the disputed area from

October 1 to 10. The gain of land, industry and people has disastrous consequences for the Poles. The first is that the Soviet Union posthaste cancels the Soviet-Polish Non-Aggression Pact of 1932, which Poland could have desperately used a year later.¹² Less than a full year later, on September 17, 1939, the Soviet Union attacks expansive Poland. Second, talks are now underway at the highest levels between Berlin and Warsaw over the future of Danzig. Since Hitler, after initial misgivings and much back and forth, also concedes to the Poles, along with West-Teschen, the predominantly German-inhabited border town of Oderberg on the edge of Upper Silesia,¹³ his hopes for compensation in Danzig are very justified. The subsequent intransigence of the Poles in this matter a year later brings a barrel to overflow and the Poles a war in which they have to bleed terribly. Thirdly, immediately after the annexation of Teschen, Poland begins to disenfranchise the non-Poles living there, both economically and administratively. Especially the Slontsaks were accused of being nothing but renegade Poles. Thus, within a short time, the state of Poland creates for itself other minorities who would rather see the downfall of this country than anything else. Fourth, Poland has now repeatedly violated the Kellogg Pact, in which it pledged with other states in 1928 "to renounce war as a means of settling international disputes and never to seek settlements otherwise than by peaceful means." The deployment of the Army Corps in September 1938 and the ultimatum to the Czechs are clear breaches of this agreement to "outlaw war." Poland can thus no longer hope, a year later, to be protected even by the Kellogg Pact. And fifth, Poland now has no neighbor other than Latvia and Romania that it has not attacked at least once since 1918. ¹¹ Rassinier, page 230 ¹² Taylor, page 234 ¹³ Roos, Poland and Europe, page 355 347

The relatively minor Teschen Affair, which no school history textbook finds worth mentioning, thus becomes the incendiary accelerant of the Danzig question and World War II. Polish-German Disputes

The fourth country with which Poland cannot find peace is the German Reich in the West. From a subjective point of view, both states have far-reaching demands on the other in terms of territory and people. In 1920, under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany must cede to the new Poland the territories of West Prussia, Posen, and East Upper Silesia, including 2 million German citizens. Map 23: Poland's Land Gains 348

In February 1919, the Polish delegation at the Versailles Victory Conference also demands the annexation of all of Upper Silesia, East Pomerania, all of West Prussia including the purely German-speaking districts, Warmia and Masuria, and the Memelland. Poland thus demands more than it has lost in the three partitions since 1772.¹⁴ The latter demands, however, fail because of the objections of the victorious powers, England and Italy. British Prime Minister Lloyd George judged Poland's demands with foresight when he commented on them on March 25, 1919: "The proposal of the Polish Government to place over 2 million Germans under Polish administration by a new demarcation of the frontier in the west must, in my judgment, sooner or later lead to a new war in Eastern Europe." ¹⁵

The German public perceives the forced cessions of territory to Poland as having varying degrees of hardship depending on the part of the country. Depending on the history and the language affiliation of the majority of the inhabitants, the lost territories are in some cases definitely seen as Polish, in others as German, and in others as originally German. The cessions and losses dragged on from 1918 to 1922. At the end of 1918, when the war ended for the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the German Reich, a Council of Regency in Warsaw proclaimed the independence of the new state of Poland on October 7, 1918. On December 13, the Polish government breaks off relations with the German Reich, and Poland henceforth considers itself the victorious power.¹⁶ Still in December, the Poles in the provinces of Posen, West Prussia and Upper Silesia, which until then had belonged to the Reich, rise up and try to annex these territories to Poland by force. The province of Posen remained Polish until 1793 and was annexed by Prussia only during the second partition of Poland. It has been under German rule ever since, with a brief interruption during the Napoleonic period. The large cities of Poznan and Gniezno are old Polish settlements, the one formerly a royal seat, the other an episcopal

see. However, as early as the mid-13th century, Polish dukes settled German colonists in the Poznan area. Thus, the present town center of Poznań is a foundation of German settlers. In 1253, German colonists established a town on the left bank of the Warta River next to an old Polish settlement on the right bank of the Warta River, which remained a purely German community until the time of the Counter-Reformation. As late as 1918, 43% of the citizens of the city of Poznan are Germans. 57% are Poles. Otherwise, before the First World War, the province of Poznan is predominantly inhabited by Poles. Only 35% of the population of the province are Germans. In the 14 Piekalkiewicz, page 36 and Halecki, page 224 15 Piekalkiewicz, page 36 16 Halecki, page 223 349 Map 24: The Former Province of Posen German Empire, the annexation of the province of Posen to the new Poland is therefore soon accepted. Thoughts of revenge, as for Alsace-Lorraine in France, do not arise because of the loss of the province of Posen in Germany after the war. In the province of West Prussia, the situation is not so simple. The land, which the Poles call Pomerellen, has in its history often alternated between Polish and German rule. When Poland first set out to conquer Pomerelia in 965, the Pomorans, an independent West Slavic people with their own language, were living there. Thus, the people who originally lived there were neither German nor Polish. The first Polish rule lasts only for a short time. In 1119 Poland succeeds in subjugating Pomerelia and the Pomorans again; this time for almost

two hundred years. Poland, for its part, is itself temporarily under German suzerainty, and at times it is independent. At the end of the 12th century, 350 350 Map 25: Parts of the Province of West Prussia, now Pomeranian Voivodeship, which became Polish in 1919, the immigration of German settlers to Pomerania also begins. In the first two centuries of Polish rule, Pomerelia did not come to rest. As early as 1202 Poland was again divided into separate duchies. During disputes between Polish dukes and in order to ward off raids by the neighboring Pruzze people, the Poles repeatedly summoned the German emperor, German princes and finally the Teutonic Order for help in the country. In 1226 the Polish Duke Konrad of Mazovia gives the land between Kulm and Thorn as a donation to the Teutonic Order at the price of reconquest from the Pruzes. From 1270 two Polish dukes fight against each other for Pomerelia and its capital Gdansk. They call upon the German Brandenburgers and the Teutonic Knights to help them in arms. At the end of this dispute, the victorious Polish duke cannot pay the Order for its support, and so Pomerelia passes into the possession of the Teutonic Order in 1309 351. In 1343 the Polish King Casimir III officially renounces Pomerellen, which is now called West Prussia in German. From then on, Pomerelia-West Prussia forms the land bridge between Pomerania and East Prussia for the German Empire. In 1410, after the Battle of Tannenberg, the Teutonic Knights recognize the supremacy of the Poles again. After another war, the land falls back to Poland completely from 1466. However, West Prussia-Pomerellen does not become an integral part of the Polish state in the sense of today's understanding. In the Second Peace of Toruń of 1466, it merely recognizes the feudal sovereignty of the Polish king and retains a number of its own sovereign rights.

and retains a number of its own sovereign rights. Thus, the inhabitants of West Prussia retain the German language, the right to their own taxes, exemption from military service outside the country, and other privileges until 1569, when Poland abolishes these prerogatives in violation of the Second Peace of Thorn. Pomerelia is thus "assimilated" into Poland. In 1772 Poland is divided for the first time. West Prussia, as a former possession of the Teutonic Order and part of the German imperial territory before 1466, is returned to Prussia and the German Empire. Thus, the question whether West Prussia-Pomerania is historically Polish or German is completely idle. In 1918, depending on the statistics, 73 to 65% of the inhabitants are now German native speakers, i.e. a good two-thirds of the population. The Kashubs living in the north of Pomerellen-West Prussia with another 6% of the total population are also not Poles, even if they speak a Slavic mother tongue.¹⁷ For all their linguistic affinity with the Poles, they themselves are as few Poles as the Dutch are Germans. In West Prussia-Pomerellen, for example,

only a quarter of the inhabitants are Polish at the end of the war in 1918. Nevertheless, the Polish delegation at the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victors in Paris claims the land for itself. In doing so, it points to the "strong" Polish population and to the historical rights it believes it has. And it refers to the promise of the USA to give post-war Poland a land connection to the sea. The counter-demand of the Germans for a plebiscite in the province of West Prussia is rejected by the victors. Germany must hand over West Prussia to Poland by January 10, 1920, except for small peripheral areas with a purely German population. The right of self-determination of the peoples, which the victorious powers had elevated to the principle of the post-war territorial order, is broken with this arrangement. The forced cession of West Prussia to the new Poland is perceived in Germany as an arbitrary act by the victors. On the one hand, the forced cession of the German population to Poland hurts. On the other hand, East Prussia is separated for the first time in 150 years. As a result, East Prussia loses its direct economic connection to the German Reich and thus its main dependency¹⁷ The 1910 census shows 60% Germans, 32% Poles and 7% Kashubs. 352 area for agricultural products. For example, the sale of cattle to the German Reich drops from 70,000 head to a mere 1,700 from 1913 to 1927.¹⁸ The figures for other agricultural goods are similar. The loss of the land bridge between northeastern Pomerania and East Prussia is one of the cuckoo's eggs of Versailles. Therefore, from 1920 the Pomeranian Voivodeship becomes a burden and a point of contention in the relations between the Germans and the Poles. According to the will of the victorious states, Poland should henceforth be a maritime power on the Baltic Sea and participate in long-distance trade by sea with its own merchant fleet. In this way, England and France provided competition for Germany and Russia. From now on, the British and the French also have a legal reason to show up in the Baltic Sea with naval forces to protect the Poles. The separation of East Prussia from the Reich also means that German land, sea and air communications there are subject to Poland's control and harassment. In 1938 and 1939, the dispute between the Reich and Poland over the northern part of Pomerania-West Prussia came to a head at the same time as the dispute over Danzig. In 1938, the German Reich initially demanded only secured, extraterritorial traffic routes through the northern part of Pomerania, through the so-called corridor. When Poland did not grant this, Germany demanded a referendum in the disputed area. It is noteworthy that until the outbreak of war, Germany never once demanded that Poland return all of West Prussia. Part of the former province of West Prussia is the city of Gdansk as the capital of the province. Its history is closely connected with that of West Prussia, but in 1920 it moves separately into the limelight of world history. On November 15, 1920, according to the decision of the victorious powers, the Hanseatic city was separated from the German Reich without a referendum and "placed under the protection of the League of Nations". The citizens of Danzig lose their German citizenship and are now citizens of a newly formed "Free State of Danzig". At that time, 340,000 people live in the city and the surrounding area. 97% of the population is German by then and 3% are members of other nations, mostly Polish. In the years between the two wars, the population demands several times a referendum on their belonging to the German Reich. The League of Nations rejects all requests in this direction.¹⁹ Poland is also not satisfied with the status of Danzig as a free state under League of Nations rule. During the Versailles Victory Conference, the Polish delegation demanded that Danzig be annexed to the new Poland. Again, the rationale is largely derived from an early affiliation of the city with Poland. ¹⁸ Grimm, page 87 ¹⁹ Burckhardt, page 26 353 The place where today's Gdansk is located is first inhabited by Burgundians, Goths and Pruzes, before it develops after the time of the migration of peoples into the main place of the Pomorans, who settled in what later became West Prussian Pomerelia in the 6th century. Thus, Gdansk is also neither German nor Polish in origin. In 1119 a Polish king conquers Gdansk for the first time together with the rest of Pomerellen. Towards the end of the century, German immigration to Gdansk begins, and in 1224 Lübeck merchants establish their own trading settlement within the city. After the

disintegration of Poland in 1202 and as a result of the above-mentioned disputes between two Polish dukes, who fought over the rule of Pomerelia, Gdansk and all of Pomerelia became the property of the Teutonic Knights in 1309. This marks the end of the first two centuries of Polish rule over Gdansk as a city of Pomorans, of Poles and of Germans. In 1343 the Polish king Casimir III officially renounced Gdansk for all time. One and a half centuries follow, during which the inhabitants of Gdansk adopt German law and language with the German immigrants. The city now belongs to the Order's territory and thus to the German Empire. The time in the empire then comes to an end with the decline of the Teutonic Order. In 1454, the now German inhabitants of Gdansk elect the Polish King Casimir IV as their new patron. Thus, for the next 130 years, Gdansk becomes a largely sovereign city republic within the Kingdom of Poland, with its own language, currency, troops, warships and fortifications, and the right to decide on war and peace. Poland's kings are not even entitled to enter Danzig with their own troops. Each new Polish king must reaffirm the city's independence and rights.²⁰ In 1573, the Gdansk City Council attempts to rejoin Germany, but Poland forces the city to remain with Poland. In the process, Gdansk also loses its special position in the Kingdom of Poland. In 1793, not quite three and a half centuries later, the city republic of Gdansk, which remained German inside, was annexed to Prussia during the second partition of Poland. From then until 1920 it belonged to the German Empire for a second time. With such an eventful history of the city, the opinions of the Poles and the Germans about Gdansk's affiliation naturally diverge. For Poland, 1920 counts the two periods in which it held suzerainty over Danzig. Here the view of the Poles is the same as for all other cities with German, Russian or Lithuanian populations that were once part of Poland in the course of history. What counts for Germany is that the Gdansk population has always been and remained German during the last six centuries. Article 102 of the Treaty of Versailles separated the Hanseatic city of Danzig from the German Reich, but without

annexing it to the new Poland. Map 26: The Free State of Danzig Article 104 stipulates that Danzig shall henceforth be a "Free" city with its own autonomous administration under the direction of a High Commissioner appointed by the League of Nations. Under the treaty, the management of Danzig's foreign affairs shall be the responsibility of the Polish Government. Thus, for the next 19 years, Danzig's interests abroad will be represented from Warsaw and no longer from Berlin. Under Article 104 of the treaty, Gdansk will also be part of Poland's customs territory from 1920 onward. The Gdansk waterways and the entire port are available to the Poles for use without restriction. Poland supervises railroad and waterway traffic in Gdansk and the surrounding area. Postal and telecommunication connections from Poland to the port –but only these– are entrusted to Polish authorities. Poland's influence on the Free State is thus clearly limited. But in the 19 years until 1939, the Polish state tries to annex the Free State in a series of small steps. The separation of the city from the German territory was supposed to provide the new Poland with the seaport promised by U.S. President Wilson. From 1928, however, this reason for Danzig's special status ceases to apply. In 1928, the Poles put their newly built port of Gdynia into operation. From then on, they had their own access to the sea. Nevertheless, the victorious powers do not return Gdansk to the German Reich. Poland extends its own postal network to the entire Free State, even though the Polish postal service is designated exclusively for the port under the Treaty of Versailles. It refuses to apply the League of Nations currency, the

Danzig guilder, as a means of payment on Danzig territory, although it is pegged to the English pound and thus not worthless. The Polish military establishes an ammunition depot in the harbor against the express protest of the Gdansk Senate. Later Poland tries to reinforce its own troops in the harbor to protect the depot, as it is said. However, the reinforcement of Polish army forces in the port of Gdansk fails due to the objection of the League of Nations. In 1932 Poland takes advantage of a British naval visit to Gdansk to move its own warships there. When the Senate of the Free City protests against this,

it is informed by Poland that "Polish warships will fire on the nearest public building if the Gdansk population insults the Polish flag on Polish ships." 21 From August 1932, Poland then generally claims the right for its fleet to stay in Gdansk harbor. Thus, the Polish state's grip on the Free State slowly but ceaselessly expands. The status of the Free State of Danzig, with a German population without German citizenship, under a League of Nations mandate, and with increasing incorporation into the Polish state, leads to lasting resentment among the population in the German Reich. A "Free State of Liverpool" under German suzerainty would have had no different effect on the people of Britain at the same time. The Germans in seceded Danzig reacted dismissively to the growing claims of the Poles, and they wished to belong to their own country again. Thus, a particularly strong sense of national identity is formed in Danzig. One quite important aspect of the limbo created by the British and French with the status of a "Free" Little Republic of Danzig under the suzerainty of the League of Nations with a German population and Polish customs, diplomatic and trade rights should not be overlooked here. The special status constructed here not only creates predictable strife and explosives between 21 Roos, Poland and Europe, Page 47 356 Poland and the German Reich. It also provides the two guarantor powers of Versailles, England and France, with a "guardianship" over Danzig and thus a say in all German-Polish disputes of the future and a military political foothold in the Baltic. Despite the interests of the British and French, and despite the efforts of the Poles to integrate Danzig permanently into their state, Hitler remained deluded until the summer of 1939. Since Danzig is not a part of the state of Poland under international law, he believes he can find a way of unification with Poland when the opportunity arises and he is otherwise accommodating. Hitler sees his concession, apart from the Teschen concession, in his own final renunciation of the people and territories lost by Germany in Posen, West Prussia, and in Upper Silesia. The renunciation by the Poles of a part of their rights in the Free State of Danzig he considers reasonable. But Danzig has become a symbol for both countries, Germany and Poland. The fourth territorial loss to Poland is in eastern Upper Silesia. Poland demands all of Upper Silesia from the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victors. The claim is also justified historically and with the Polish population. However, Silesia's history under the rule of Poland is only an early and rather short interlude. Around the year 990, Silesia first comes to Poland through Map 27: Silesia 357 conquest, which at the time is itself under German suzerainty. In 1163, in a Polish succession dispute, the German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa intervenes, arranges for the creation of two Silesian duchies and the installation of Polish Piast princes as regents. The Piast dukes call German craftsmen and peasants to their sparsely populated land to cultivate Silesia. Silesia thus slowly becomes German. In 1202 Poland breaks up into its duchies for over a century, and from then on Silesia no longer belongs to one state of Poland. In the course of time, both duchies divide into numerous piastic petty principalities by inheritance. In 1327 all the Piast princes in Upper Silesia recognize the Bohemian King John from the German House of Luxembourg as their liege lord. Bohemia itself belongs to the German Empire. In 1335 Poland's King Casimir the Great, formally and by treaty for all time, renounces his suzerainty over Silesia and Poland's claim to it. The Polish history of Silesia ends with this at the latest. Thus, when the state of Poland was re-established after the First World War, there has been no Polish claim to Silesia for six centuries and no political connection between Silesia and Poland for seven centuries. At the end of World War I, the population of Upper Silesia is overwhelmingly German. It was not until the second half of the 19th century, when eastern Upper Silesia developed into an industrial area and the border region offered attractive jobs for people in nearby Russian Poland and Habsburg Galicia, that large numbers of Polish industrial and agricultural workers migrated to Silesia. With the collapse of the German Empire and the end of the war in 1918, the Polish delegates in Versailles and the descendants of Polish guest workers attempt to annex all of Upper Silesia to the new Poland. 22 In November 1918, the revolution in Germany also reaches the province of Silesia. Poles take command in the soldiers' councils

of many towns and raise the red and white flag of Poland on the town hall roofs. They try to turn the change from monarchy to republic into an annexation of Upper Silesia to Poland and to present the victors' conference in Versailles with a *fait accompli*, as in the case of Posen and West Prussia.²³ The German Supreme Army Command puts an end to the attempt. It is the first Polish uprising in Upper Silesia of four in three years. What follows is extremely turbulent to the bad end. In January 1919, elections to the Reichstag are held. Polish groups in Silesia call on their compatriots to boycott the election. 75% of the voters nevertheless vote for German parties, although conditions in Germany at the time are extremely depressing. Less than half a year later, on May 7, 1919, 22 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 2, pp. 157 ff 23 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 2, p. 161 358 the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victors decreed the surrender of all of Upper Silesia to Poland. After the January elections, this is an obvious breach of the Silesian population's right to self-determination. The German delegation in Versailles therefore demands a referendum in Upper Silesia. After the loss of the Saar region and the German part of Lorraine to France, this would have been the third industrial region that the victors wanted to take from Germany. Moreover, the Upper Silesian coal and industrial region had been developed exclusively by German engineers and with German capital. On June 16, 1919, the "Supreme Allied Council" granted the Germans a referendum against France's vote. The elections are to be conducted by an inter-Allied commission and under the protection of Allied troops. Germany must withdraw its troops stationed in the voting area beforehand. After the withdrawal of the German troops and before the arrival of the Allied soldiers, a second uprising of the Poles breaks out in order to forestall the referendum and the foreign military. On July 10, 1919, insurgents, as the Germans call them, or patriots, as the Poles see them, blow up three railroad and road bridges to seal off the disputed territory from Germany. German customs still manage to intercept shipments of weapons and propaganda material from Poland, but by July 16, Polish miners are on strike throughout the Silesian mining district. Then an uprising of almost 22,000 armed fighters organized in Polish associations breaks out.²⁴ The former Reichstag deputy Korfanty, who had represented the Silesian Poles in Berlin until then, leads the uprising. Since the Reichswehr had been withdrawn at the behest of the victorious powers, German Freikorps intervene. They enter Upper Silesia against the protest of the victors and end the second revolt within a week. On February 11, 1920, the Interallied Control Commission took over political power in Upper Silesia. With it, 11,500 French and 2,000

Italian soldiers under the leadership of the French General Le Rond enter Upper Silesia. Le Rond makes no secret of his sympathy for Poland. He takes sides instead of mediating. On August 17, 1920, clashes broke out in Katowice between German demonstrators and French troops. Korfanty seizes the opportunity for a third uprising. Bloody clashes and looting spread throughout Upper Silesia. The state of Poland marches on the border with 11 divisions and applies pressure from outside. Polish militias with reinforcements from Poland push back the German security forces and, with the silent acquiescence of the French, depose German teachers and officials in several counties. The insurgents attempt a third time to take over Upper Silesia without elections 24 Benoist-Mechin, Volume 2, page 168 359. This time the uprising is ended by negotiations. The "Supreme Allied Council" now draws consequences. In March 1921, it transfers another 2,000 soldiers, this time from England, to Upper Silesia to allow undisturbed elections. On March 21, 1921, the referendum demanded by the Germans took place. The day is preceded once again by bloody clashes.

precede it. During election rallies and at the ballot, 1,520 German citizens meet their deaths. The results of the election lead to the partition of Upper Silesia. Almost 61% of the population vote to remain part of the German Reich, 39% want an annexation to the new Poland. Regrettably, the result does not show a clear national border. A majority of the inhabitants of 13 towns in the industrial area want to remain with Germany, but a majority of the rural inhabitants in the constituencies where these towns are

located want to remain with Poland. Although the overall majority would be enough for Germany, and although some of the towns have access to the adjacent German majority territory, the Interallied Control Commission assigns them to Poland. However, the commission initially disagrees on which border line should divide the majority territories. The British and Italians propose a dividing line that would leave 350,000 Poles with the German Empire. The French, however, prevail with a border that would make 400,000 Germans citizens of Poland.²⁵ Germans and Poles regret the decision. Germany mourns the loss of 400,000 citizens and its Silesian territory. 85% of the Upper Silesian coal deposits now belong to Poland. Poland, however, had obviously expected more. About the time of the elections, France delivers weapons for Poland's war with Russia. Some of the weapons are diverted to Silesia in Poland.²⁶ On May 1, 1921, the Interallied Commission announces the course of the new border. The Poles are not ready to accept the result of the vote and the division of Upper Silesia. On May 2, the Polish population goes on strike in Silesia's mines, factories and agriculture. On May 3, Korfanty calls for the fourth uprising. Trains of artillery pieces, mortars, small arms and supplies roll from Poland into Upper Silesia, still German under international law. Poland's regular army supports the uprising with a few battalions of infantry. General Le Rond's French soldiers let the Polish truck and infantry columns move unmolested. The Italians do their duty and confront the insurgents and the Polish forces, which they pay for with 40 dead and 200 wounded.²⁷ Two Korfanty documents survive from May 3. The appeal to the population: ²⁵ Benoist-Mechin, vol. 2, page 172 ²⁶ Benoist-Mechin, vol. 2, page 173 ²⁷ Benoist-Mechin, vol. 2, page 176 360 "Fellow citizens! ... For 20 years I have fought ceaselessly for your rights and independence. Striking and fighting workers! I am henceforth your brother among you and I place myself at the head of our movement in agreement with our Polish parties. ... In order to organize a mass movement, I appoint Nowina Doliva commander-in-chief of all armed forces. All district commanders, leaders and insurgents themselves owe him absolute obedience. At the headquarters of Bytom on May 3, 1921, the birthday of the Polish Constitution. Korfanty" ²⁸ The other document is a letter to the governments of the Allied victorious powers of the same day: "... I most solemnly declare that I have done everything possible to prevent an armed insurrection, a disturbance of public order. But when the proposals of the High Interallied Commission concerning the partition of Upper Silesia became known to the Polish workers and peasants, who for centuries have been the object of unconscionable exploitation and a brutal policy of oppression on the part of Prussia and Germany, the masses were seized with boundless despair at the thought that they might again return to the Prussian yoke...24 hours after the arrival of the bad news.... the population spontaneously took up arms..... In order to prevent this passionate outburst of the bitter armed people from degenerating into a state of anarchy under the influence of criminal elements, I placed myself at the head of the movement at the request of the insurgents and strikers in order to ... restore public order as quickly as possible. Korfanty. " ²⁹ France blames the uprising on the German press. British Prime Minister Lloyd George assesses the uprising from his point of view quite differently in the House of Commons on May 13, 1921: "The Allies have determined by a general decision that those parts of Upper Silesia which voted overwhelmingly for Poland should be given to Poland. Now the Poles staged an uprising and presented the Allies with a fait accompli³⁰. This move was a complete breach of the Versailles Peace Treaty. Poland is the last country likely to attempt to violate the Treaty of Versailles ²⁸ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 2, page 175 ²⁹ Baumfalk, page 178 ³⁰ fait accompli 361...If Poland were given permission to overrun these German provinces, it would come to a bad end..." ³¹ Polish insurgents and troops conquer eastern Upper Silesia to the headwaters of the Oder River, an area a quarter larger than the Saar region, by May 5, within two days. The Reich government protests to the governments of the victorious powers on May 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7. France attempts to place the Polish conquest under its protection and threatens that it will regard a deployment of the Reichswehr in Upper Silesia as a breach

of the Treaty of Versailles and will punish it by occupying the Ruhr. In France, as a sign that the threat had not been uttered in vain, the draftee class of 1919, which had already been discharged, was called up again. From May 9, 1921, the Poles try to attack further to the west. But in the meantime volunteers from all over Germany and from Austria gather, form Freikorps and from May 21 begin to recapture the lost and partly destroyed country. From May 21 to 25, Poles and Freikorps engage in a decisive battle at Annaberg near the small town of Krappnitz. Most of the Polish conquests can be regained for Germany. Bitter for the volunteers from all over Germany is the behavior of their own Reich government in Berlin. Even as the battle is in full swing, it announces by decree on May 24, under massive pressure from Paris, that any German Freikorp soldier who takes part in the fighting in Upper Silesia will be punished with imprisonment or a fine of up to 100,000 marks.³² Thus, the Polish-German conflict in Silesia contributes not insignificantly to the lasting destruction of the trust of the World War II soldiers in their own government and in the new German republic. On July 5, the Freikorps liberated most of Upper Silesia. The partition now follows a proposal by the Italian foreign minister, Count Sforza, with a new dividing line - the Sforza Line - so that the German and Polish minorities in the respective foreign countries are roughly balanced in numbers. On June 17, 1922, East Upper Silesia left the Reichsverband. The Polish historian Halecki evaluates the result of this dispute as follows: "France alone favored the Polish claims, while England and Italy wanted to grant Poland only two agricultural districts. In the end, the issue was resolved in a way that was most consistent with international justice.... In this way Poland also gained a considerable part of the rich industrial lands..The new Polish province of Silesia was the only ver³¹ Baumfalk, page 180 32 Reichsgesetzblatt 1921, page 711 362 Map 28: The Battles for Annaberg proportionately small part of the restored republic that transcended the boundaries of the time before the (Polish) partitions. "³³ In Germany, the cession of the industrial area and the predominantly German towns beyond the Sforza line is felt as a painful loss. This stands between Germany and the new Poland until Adolf Hitler 33 Halecki, page 229 363 reduces the German demands to Danzig and the transit routes. Hitler does not relate any of his demands to eastern Upper Silesia. But the Franco-Polish interplay in the partition and in the uprisings of the Poles shapes the security thinking of the German imperial governments and the young Reichswehr for the next 20 years. From then on, every tension and conflict with France was seen as a Polish threat, and every confrontation with Poland was seen as a French threat. Since then, the Reichswehr and the population have an idea that a weakness in the military means the extortionability of the state. France's threat to occupy the Ruhr in the west if the Reich resisted foreign annexations in the east remained unforgotten until World War II. The secret armament preparations before 1933 and the rapid reconstruction of the German armed forces after 1935 gain their legitimacy in the eyes of the population and the soldiers from this experience of the early 1920s. Poland returned to the stage of European history as an independent nation in 1919. But it does not seek its new identity within the borders imposed by the victors of the First World War. The modern Poles of 1919 dream of

the old Poland-Lithuania of 1450. They begin their latest history with a series of self-staged wars. This not only earns them the enmity of all their neighbors, but it also devalues a whole number of treaties that might have protected them in 1939. Poland as a multi-ethnic state The new Poland has been created with the annexation of formerly Ukrainian, Belorussian,

Lithuanian, Czech and German territories, the new Poland has become a multiethnic state. In 1923, the country's population consisted of 30 million Polish citizens, of whom 19 million, or two-thirds, spoke Polish as their mother tongue. Five million are Ukrainians, 2.5 million Jews, 2 million Germans and 1.2 million are Belarusians.³⁴ In addition, there are other minorities of Lithuanian, Czech or Hungarian origin as well as Kashubs and Slonzaks. In the conquered "Eastern Poland" the Poles themselves are a minority. For every 7.4 million Ukrainians, Jews and White Russians, there are just 35 1.5 million Poles,

i.e. just under one sixth of all the people living there.³⁵ Poland initially had to recognize and guarantee the rights of its minorities in the Treaty of Versailles on the Protection of Minorities.³⁶ But the Poles perceive this protection treaty as discriminatory because it only 34 Castellan, pages 151 ff; the figures are derived from the contradictory Polish statistics in the source given 35 Info BpB, issue 142, page 25 36 Minority Protection Treaty of June 28, 1919, so-called Minorities Treaty 364 binds them and not also their neighboring countries. Poland also accedes to the "Geneva Convention for the Protection of Minorities" on May 15, 1922. The constitution of the new state of Poland also guarantees adequate rights to national minorities.³⁷ Article 109 of the Polish constitution states: "Every citizen has the right to preserve his nationality and to cultivate his language and national peculiarities. Special state laws ensure minorities in the Polish state the full free development of their national peculiarities with the help of autonomous minority associations....." The protection of the life, rights, mother tongue and traditions of the many non-Polish nationalities is thus initially secured by law and international law in the newly created state of Poland. However, the "special state laws" provided for in the constitution are never enacted. Poland very soon begins to reverse the Russification and Germanization it had endured earlier, and in Polonizing those who are now minorities in Poland it goes far beyond what they themselves had previously been expected to do, at least under German and Habsburg rule. First of all, from 1922 onwards, non-Polish who had entered the country after 1908 were expelled, even if they had legally acquired businesses, companies or land there. Then the non-Polish were given the choice of choosing Poland or "opting" for Germany or other countries and emigrating there. The "optants", who declared their allegiance to Germany, Austria or the Soviet Union and left the country, were not compensated for the property they left behind, for the expropriated real estate, for the farmland and their forests. In addition, officials with Russian or German as their mother tongue are dismissed. About half of the Russian, Jewish and German schools and universities have to close. Dual-language instruction, if still given after the end of the war, is banned by law³⁸ and Polish is declared the sole language of instruction. A large number of Ukrainians, Belarussians, Jews, Austrians and Germans were deprived of their medical and pharmacist's licenses and of their business and publishing licenses.³⁹ Apart from that, Poland boycotted everything that was not Polish. Beginning in 1919, disfavored persons were concentrated and imprisoned in camps near Szczypiorno and Stralkowno. Here alone 16,000 "enemies of the state" with German as their mother tongue were imprisoned. In 1923, camps were also set up near Brest-Litovsk and Bereza Kartuska to concentrate other "enemies of the state."⁴⁰ By 37 Constitution of March 17, 1921 38 Law of July 31, 1924 39 Law of December 1921 40 Kendziora, page 22 365 In 1939, some 15,000 minority complaints from Poles reached the League of Nations in Geneva, in which those affected reported and complained of arbitrary acts, violations of the law, and harassment by Poles against non-Poles. From March to August 1939, the Foreign Office in Berlin registered 1,500 such cases against Germans alone.⁴¹ The Council of the League of Nations had to repeatedly raise the situation of minorities in the state of Poland as an issue, but it was hardly able to change anything. On June 15, 1932, Lord Noel-Buxton reports to the House of Lords in London on a meeting of the Council on this subject: "In recent days important questions affecting national minorities have been dealt with at meetings of the Council of the League of Nations. Above all, at the January meeting, a report was negotiated dealing with the so-called terrorization which took place in the Ukraine in the autumn of 1930..Assimilation by destruction of culture is the order of the day...From the Corridor and from Posen no less than 1 million Germans have already emigrated since the annexation because they find the conditions there intolerable...In the Polish part of Eastern Galicia, from the end of the war until 1929, the elementary schools were reduced by two-thirds. In the universities where Ukrainians held eleven chairs under Austrian rule, they now have none, although they had been promised their own university by the Polish government in 1922. In that part of Polish Ukraine which formerly belonged to Russia,

Volhynia, conditions are even harsher. Here there is an extensive system of colonization by former soldiers, and these people persecute their neighbors in a most deplorable manner.....In all Ukraine, moreover, there is the system of police persecution..We cannot leave aside in this connection one particularly deplorable fact, namely, the torture of prisoners in jails and of suspects who have incurred the disfavor of the Polish authorities. Convincing evidence that medieval torture is used in such cases is available, to my regret. These representations were described in the Council of the League of Nations by Lord Cecil, as delegate of the British Government, as shocking the conscience of mankind. They have not been examined by the Council, as should have been done...I wish to remind your Lordships of their plight by reading out the words of an excellent legal scholar, ... Sir Walter Napier, who wrote: "The leaders of the village were surrounded, driven into a barn, stripped, held down and beaten with thick sticks used for threshing. Doctors were forbidden to go from the towns to the villages. And peasants who attempted to go to the towns for treatment 41 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 218 366 ben were forced to turn back by the police. "... We must not forget that Poland has very special cause to observe these treaties, for the annexations granted to her were granted on condition that she grant autonomy to these territories. This provision was made by the Ambassadors' Conference in 1923, of which our 42 country was a leading member..." 42 The particular interest of the British in the fate of the Ukrainians in eastern Poland, which can be discerned here, is explained by the large influx of Ukrainian emigrants to British Canada. Another problem for the non-Polish arises from the very strong identification of all native-born Poles with the Roman Catholic Church. The Church of Rome has been the refuge of Polishness in the past 150 years of foreign rule in divided Poland. This is now showing its effect. Thus, after World War I, "being Protestant" in Poland is synonymous with being German, and belonging to one of the three Orthodox churches in Belarus and Ukraine does not fit true Polishness. The formula "Pole equals Catholic" also excludes Jews. The new Poland uses the Church wherever possible to polonize its minorities. Thus, Warsaw uses a concordat with Rome⁴³ to ban Russian and Lithuanian from services in the Catholic churches of Belarus and the Vilnius region. Polish and Latin take their place.⁴⁴ Protestant Sunday schools in German, a form of voluntary instruction on holidays, are suppressed by the police. The new Poland will not be a multiethnic state like Habsburg before it. It does not see itself as a state with a multitude of denominations and nations. In Poland from 1920 on, only those who speak Polish and believe in Roman Catholicism are accepted. On December 14, 1931, the English MANCHESTER GUARDIAN describes the Polish nationality policy as a "hell". "The minorities in Poland are to disappear," the paper writes. "This policy is being ruthlessly pushed forward without the slightest regard for world public opinion, international treaties, and the League of Nations. Ukraine has become a hell under Polish rule. The same can be said of Belarus with even greater justification. The goal of Polish policy is the disappearance of national minorities on paper and in reality." Belarusians and Ukrainians, as the ancestral majority east of the Curzon Line, vigorously resist all attempts at polonization and catholicization. When the government of Poland set about seizing land in Belarus 42 Burneleit, pages 26 ff 43 Concordat of February 10, 1925 44 Castellan, page 156 367 and banning the Belarusian language from newspapers and schools in 1924 and 1925, there was a popular uprising, terror and counter-terror. The country remained unsettled until the Soviet occupation in September 1939.

unsettled. In Ukraine, too, the coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians is ill-fated. After the end of the world war, the Ukrainians first of all riot heavily against the Poles, whom they remember as former oppressors. Then Poland conquers western Ukraine east of the Curzon

Line, and revenge rages in reverse. An observer on the ground, the French Slavic studies professor Martel, describes the territorial takeover of Ukraine by the Poles somewhat drastically thus: "There was shooting, hanging, torture, imprisonment, confiscation, in short, one enjoyed oneself quite as in the

good old days. Many Ukrainian priests were executed. To avoid overcrowding, the Poles did not take prisoners.....The prisons of Lviv overflowed with Ukrainians of all classes ... whose only crime was to be Ukrainian or to speak Ukrainian." 45 The Poles know that the Ukrainians in their country aspire to a separate state with the Ukrainians in the neighboring Soviet Union, or at least to unification. Thus, Warsaw suspects that the Polish Ukrainians are Communists or Bolsheviks and are in pact with the Soviets. Only in 1933 and 34 does the situation in Polish Ukraine relax for a respite, when Poland makes an attempt to win over its "own" Ukrainians and those in the Soviet Union to a Greater Ukraine under Poland's domination. Nevertheless, the hatred of both nations for each other remains within the new Poland until the Soviet Union reconquers the country. In 1930, Archbishop Szeptyckyj, Metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church of Lviv, writes a letter to a friend lamenting, "We are living through terrible times. The punitive expeditions are ruining our villages, our schools, our economic institutions. Thousands of villagers, six priests, women, intellectuals were beaten, often until they lost consciousness. Inordinate tributes and requisitions are imposed on the villages, as in war. The police and the army are waging a real war against the peaceful, innocent population of our unhappy country. The pretext that they are fighting or suppressing only communists and terrorists is totally mistaken. This is only a fiction. It is a crisis aggravation of a system of persecutions which has not ceased since the year 1920." 46 45 Castellan, page 159 46 Castellan, page 161 368 Furthermore, Poland's large minorities include 2.5 million Jews. This group is also considered a problem on the Polish side. In 1970, the Polish historian Halecki wrote in his "History of Poland": "The Jewish question became particularly burning before the Second World War. This was a very incisive question, considering that more than three million Jews - almost ten percent of the total population lived scattered all over the country, that they represented still a much higher percentage in the urban population, in trade and industry, and in certain professions, and that only an insignificant number of them were truly assimilated. Under these circumstances, the rise of an anti-Semitic movement, for economic reasons far 47 more than for racial ones, was almost inevitable." 47 In addition to the racial and economic reasons mentioned by Halecki, there were probably partisan reasons for the low level of integration of the Jews among the Poles. Among the members of the Jewish minority, the adherence of the CP of Poland is obviously particularly high, or at least there are suspicions that this is so. In March 1937, Polish Prime Minister Skladkowski complains in a conversation with Professor Burckhardt, the High Commissioner of the League of Nations in Gdansk, that "60% of our Jews are Communists and 48 90% of all Communists are Jews." 48 Communists in Poland are always suspected of being sympathizers of the unloved Soviet Union. In 1935, Polish Foreign Minister Beck set up a working group to deal "with the Jewish question in Poland" and find ways to resolve it. As chance would have it, the development of the island of Madagascar became a public issue in France in 1937. Colonists are sought, but the French show little inclination to emigrate there. When France's Foreign Minister Delbos makes a state visit to Warsaw in December 1937, his host Beck takes the opportunity to ask Delbos "whether he agrees that all Polish Jews should emigrate to the island of Madagascar." 49 Delbos does not elaborate. Prime Minister Skladkowski also takes the view that the Jews would do well to pursue their emigration in cooperation with the Polish state. He expresses this at a meeting of the budget committee of the Sejm.⁵⁰ The Jewish population is obviously a permanent topic for high politics in Poland until the state perishes in 1939. In 1931, the former foreign minister Dmowski declares that the Jewish question is the greatest problem for the civilization of the whole earth, and he takes the position that only the "complete expulsion" of the Jews from Poland can solve the Jewish question.⁵¹ 47 Halecki, page 234 48 Burckhardt, page 73 49 Rassinier, page 127 50 Meeting of January 14, 1939, see Archives of the Present, page 3889 51 Hoggan, page 24. Cited there: Swiat Powojenny i Polska, Warsaw 1937, page 317 369 The anti-Semitic movement, as Halecki calls it, leads to the fact that in the years from 1933 to 1938 557. 000 Jews leave their Polish homeland and seek

refuge in neighboring Germany (from where 170,000 German Jews emigrate abroad during the same period).⁵² The German Reich authorities attempt to deport about 50,000 of these fleeing Jews back to Poland. The Polish police prevent the return of these poor people and drive them back to the German side at the borders with bayonets. This expulsion and this turning away of Jews is a deeply shameful piece of common history for Germany and Poland alike. Poland soon revokes the Polish citizenship of the Jews who have emigrated to Germany and elsewhere. The lot of the Jews remaining in Poland later becomes a disaster after the conquest in the German-occupied part of the country by German guilt. Another minority, but with only 106,000 people, are the Kashubs. These are the descendants of the Pomorans, the original population in coastal Pomerelia from the time before the first Polish conquest. They maintain not only their own language but also their own identity. The political importance of the Kashubs in the 1920s derives from their settlement area in the north of West Prussia-Pomerellen, where Pomerania and East Prussia come closest together. The Poles count the Kashubs as Polish in order to prove that the population in the corridor has always been Polish. The dissatisfaction of the Kashubs with their new state authority in Warsaw is interpreted by the Poles as ingratitude and stupidity. The German minority in Poland – at first about 2 million people – decreased to 1.2 million by 1923 due to the expulsion of the "optants", the exodus of the dismissed civil servants who could no longer live there without salaries, the closure of many German schools, the expropriations and the terror. At the same time, the German Reich was in the midst of an economic crisis. It also has to absorb and provide for the people expelled from Alsace-Lorraine and the occupied Rhineland. The Reich government therefore urges the Germans still living in Poland to remain there.⁵³ This in turn generates suspicion and accusation in Poland that Germany wants to keep a minority in Poland and thus claim lost territories. The Germans who remain in Poland accept their lot as second-class citizens under foreign rule only with reluctance. Also, attempts to forcefully educate Germans to become Poles show little success. The Poles therefore consider the German minority disloyal and regard them as foreigners, even though they are now citizens of their state. In September 1934, Poland unilaterally terminates the 52 Benoit-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 39 53 Strobel, p. 23 370 Minority Protection Treaty, which it had been forced to conclude in 1919 at the request of the victorious powers. From 1934 onward, Adolf Hitler endeavored to resolve the Danzig question and the corridor problem by agreement with the Polish government. He hoped for concessions and tried to reduce the tensions between the two countries, also to the advantage of the German minority in Poland. The effort resulted in two treaties: the Friendship and Nonaggression Treaty of 1934 and a Minority Protection Agreement in November 1937. The effect of the latter on the German minority in Poland did not last long. When in 1938 first Austria and then the Sudeten territories were united with the German Reich or occupied, as the Poles saw it, the fear of the Poles increased that Germany could also reclaim from them land and people from the stock of the former German Reich. After the annexation of the Teschen region by Poland in September 38, when Hitler demanded negotiations on the future of the city of Danzig and a guarantee of safe transport links to the separated East Prussia, the hostility of the Poles against their German minority again took sharp forms. Acts of terror against Germans, the destruction of German stores and arsons on German farms become pogroms. After the return of the Memelland to the Reich in March, the situation of the Germans in Poland becomes completely unbearable. The Poles now consider war with Germany unavoidable. Therefore, in mid-August 39, Poland begins with the preventive arrest of members of the minority and their deportation to Inner Poland.⁵⁴ In the summer of 1939, the number of Germans who want to escape this and leave Poland "illegally" grows ever larger. By mid-August, over 76,000 had fled to the Reich⁵⁵ and an additional 18,000 to the Danzig area. The reports about the Poles' treatment of their German minority and the accounts of those who fled are oil on the fire of German-Polish relations in the last weeks and days before the outbreak of war. The dispute over the future of Gdansk thus takes

on a second dimension. In the summer of 1939, the influx of refugees from Poland was accompanied by renewed indignation in Germany over the treatment of their compatriots in neighboring Poland. The ominous phrase circulates, "When will the Führer put an end to this?" Contrary to what the victorious powers

of the First World War had foreseen and wished, Poland did not develop into a multiethnic state in the manner of Switzerland. From the very beginning, it squandered the opportunity to integrate the minorities into a new fatherland. In the new Poland, not even the attempt is made to win the large minorities of Germans, Jews, Belorussians and 54 Schulze-Dirschau, page 155 and Rasmus, page 115 55 Stader Tageblatt of August 18, 1939 371 Ukrainians for their own country. Rather, Poland is becoming a state in which the titular nation is attempting to use coercive measures to polonize the third of its citizens who are not ethnically Polish or to induce them to emigrate. The effort to destroy the identity of Germans, Jews, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians spirals hatred and terror for nearly two decades. Instead of the Poles, as the strongest force in the country, seeking reconciliation and normalization, their chauvinism keeps all wounds open. Thus, in 1939, in Germany and in Russia, no one is any longer willing to regard the Poles as the victims of the three earlier partitions, to whom one owes something historically. They are now seen as the perpetrators against Germans and Russians, who have been saddled with the fate of the minority in Poland. In sum, Poland's minority policy leads to extreme tensions in its own country and to tangible hostility towards Poland in almost all neighboring countries. Poland therefore became the second of the three multi-ethnic states born in Versailles and Saint-Germain to break down due to the egoism of its titular nation. Just as Czechoslovakia before and Yugoslavia after failed because of the inability of the Czechs and the Serbs to give their minorities an adequate share in the state, so Poland fails. Germany's fundamental attitude toward Poland The loss of the wholly or predominantly German-populated parts of Dan-zig and West Prussia is not accepted by any political force in the German Reich after 1920. A subsequent change in the course of the German-Polish border is therefore the common concern of all parties in the Reichstag from the far right to the far left. Foreign Minister Stresemann expresses this in a letter⁵⁶ in which he writes: "One of my essential tasks is the correction of the eastern borders: The recovery of Danzig, the Polish corridor, and a correction of the borders of Upper Silesia: ... That we do not recognize the frontier in the East I once expressed to the chagrin of the Polish government in a public speech in the Foreign Committee, when I declared that no German government from the German Nationalists to the Communists would ever recognize the frontier of the Versailles Treaty." ⁵⁷ Stresemann, Nobel Peace Prize winner and father of Franco-German reconciliation, expressed the same thing again on December 14, 1925, in a keynote speech on the Locarno negotiations, in which France's borders and possession of Alsace and Lorraine had been confirmed: ⁵⁶ Letter of September 7, 1925 ⁵⁷ Kern, page 72 372 "The other complex of questions was that of the Eastern questions. We made the commitment to refrain from any attack in the West. We rejected it for the East..The League of Nations leaves war free if agreement cannot be reached on political questions. While I do not seek warlike confrontations, I do not exclude border changes in the East if the impossible drawing of borders in the East should one day bring about conditions which make this necessary." ⁵⁸ Incidentally, Great Britain also rejected a guarantee of the existence of the former German territories in favor of Poland during these Locarno negotiations. The consensus on the desired revision of Germany's eastern frontier extends to the far left not only to the German Communists. It is supported by Communists throughout Europe, remarkably including the CP of Poland. The European Communists are in principle on the side of the "oppressed" in the minority question before the Second World War. In the Declaration of the Communist Parties of January 1933, mentioned earlier in this book, the right of self-determination of all population groups separated from the former German Reich is demanded and, if necessary, the return of land and people to the German Reich. This declaration also

speaks expressis verbis⁵⁹ of Danzig, Upper Silesia and West Prussia-Pomerania. With regard to Poland, it says: "The conference notes that the revolutionary proletariat of France, Italy, Poland, England (etc.) ... is developing a relentless struggle against the imperialist and warlike policy of its own bourgeoisie and against national oppression: ... against the predatory policy of Polish imperialism towards Gdansk, against the national oppression in Upper Silesia and Pomerelia ... The Conference welcomes the struggle of the CP of Poland for the right of free self-determination of the people of Upper Silesia and the Polish Corridor, Western Ukraine and White Russia up to the point of separation from Poland, and for the right of the people of Danzig to join Germany voluntarily." ⁶⁰ The reservations about Germany's eastern border and the status of the city of Danzig thus existed in Germany long before Adolf Hitler came to power. They are not a peculiarity of National Socialist foreign policy. There is an otherwise rare unanimity of all parties in the German Reichstag on these issues. All 16 Reich governments of the postwar period, in addition to their goal of correcting Germany's borders with Poland when the opportunity arises, see the danger that Poland itself will annex even more areas of Germany. The unambiguity and frequency of Polish demands for East Prussia, Pomerania, and Upper Silesia in 58 Burneleit, page 31 ⁵⁹ explicitly ⁶⁰ Burneleit, page 33 373 public speeches, newspapers, and on posters cannot be overlooked. Germany, until 1933 with only 10 army divisions and without an air force, could not successfully resist Poland militarily with 30 divisions plus its own air force in the event of an attack on one of the provinces. Thus, governments up to Adolf Hitler tried to take the force out of Polish pressure by reaching a comprehensive understanding with France and with the Soviet Union. Poland's military mind games Poland's security is based half on treaties, half on military. Much as the new state initially takes advantage of the weakness of its large neighbors, its relative troop strength dwindles over the years until, by 1939, not much of it remains. From 1920 on, Poland maintained an army of 30 divisions with almost 300,000 men.⁶¹ In 1920 and 1921, Poland was still able to defeat the troops of this large neighbor in the war with the Soviet Union and was able to almost wear them out. The neighbor Germany is also no match for the Poles with only 10 divisions for many years. At the beginning of the thirties the relations changed. In 1931, the Soviet Union already maintained 80 army divisions.⁶² In 1939, at the beginning of World War II, Poland, with a peacetime army strength of 35 divisions,⁶³ stood between Germany with 5,164 and the Soviet Union with 143 peacetime divisions.⁶⁵ Poland's disadvantage lay not only in these numbers. It also lies in the fact that Poland, despite spending a full third of all government revenue on its military between the two wars, has failed to keep the army's armory and its air force's aircraft modern. Less crucial though that may surprise is Poland's center position, for the Soviet Union and Germany are also countries strategically in a bind at the time: Germany between France and Poland and the Soviet Union between Poland and Japan in the Far East. From hindsight and knowing Poland's defeat in 1939, it seems grotesque to see Poland as a threat to the German Reich or the Soviet Union. But from the point of view of the times, Poland is certainly a serious threat to both countries in alliance with France on the one hand and Japan on the other. This assessment of Poland by the Germans and the Russians in the 1920s and 1930s, so astonishing today, results ⁶¹ Roos, Polen und Europa, page 138 ⁶² Roos, Polen und Europa, page 32 ⁶³ Ploetz, 2. WK, Teil 2, page 337 (31 divisions and cavalry brigades in strength of another 4 divisions) ⁶⁴ Ploetz, 2. WK, Part 2, page 122 ⁶⁵ Ploetz, 2. WK, Part 2, page 448 374 at that time, first, from the still dewy experience, second, until 1935, from Poland's plans of attack in the event of war, and third, from what is done and said in Poland. The memories of the annexation of "Eastern Poland" and the attempts to conquer Upper Silesia are being met from Poland with new demands for land and people and with further threatening gestures. Poland does not let wounds heal. Poland also has objective reasons to fear the German Reich and the Soviet Union. First, the French leverage against Germany has been weakening since the latter recognized France's territorial gains after the World War

in Locarno in 1925. Second, Poland knows that Germany does not recognize Poland's territorial gains wherever the majority of the population speaks German and where the victors have prevented plebiscites. Third, the western and northern borders with the German Reich are difficult to defend, despite the country's own initial superiority in troops. If East Prussia is seen as a potential gateway to Warsaw, or the danger from there against Poland's supplies by sea through Pomerelia, this must worry the Poles. Thus Polish defense planning to the west is in principle geared to the danger from Germany. Until 1935, as long as Poland is superior, its war preparations are based on a French-Polish joint plan, the Foch Plan. This envisaged an attack by both countries against Germany, with a main thrust on Berlin and a secondary attack by the Poles against East Prussia.⁶⁶ The Polish General Staff also prepared three supplementary plans. One for a limited attack against Hinterpommern to expand the corridor, a second

to occupy Danzig and part of East Prussia, and a third against Central Silesia.⁶⁷ The defense of the Poles is thus called an attack against Germany until 1935. Then the regime in Poland changed. After Pilsudski's death in 1935, a successor collective under General Rydz-Smigly takes over the power in the state. Around this time, the German Wehrmacht reaches the size of the Polish armed forces. In the meantime, the Red Army of the Soviet Union has grown to many times the size of the Polish one. From now on, Polish operational planning for the war envisages the defense of the country on its own soil. However, the previous idea of striking Germany from two sides in a joint French-Polish offensive is still found as a strategic objective in the Polish General Staff's "Studium Niemcy" (Study Germany) as of 1935.⁶⁸ ⁶⁶ Roos, Planning Poland, page 187 ⁶⁷ Roos, Planning Poland, page 187 ⁶⁸ Roos, Planning Poland, page 191 ³⁷⁵ Even in 1939, the idea of an attack against Germany is not completely off the table. The defense of Poland in 1939 is based on a memorandum by General Kutrzeba dated January 26, 1938.⁶⁹ While the general quite realistically assumes that Polish forces will be inferior to German forces, he believes that they will nevertheless be able to hold Poland for a few weeks. He expects that France will help Poland militarily after not quite eight weeks, and that Germany can then be defeated. Kutrzeba's concept also still assumes that a war can be won by Poland and France in a second phase with an attack on Berlin after an initial defensive phase. He believes that it will come to that as soon as the Wehrmacht has to withdraw parts of its troops from Poland and throw them against France. Regardless of the real circumstances, past victories against the Soviet Union and against Lithuania, as well as a strong sense of national pride, give the Poles a military self-confidence that has grown into complete overconfidence. Shortly before the beginning of the war, Poland's Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, Commander-in-Chief Rydz-Smigly, and apparently the majority of the Polish officer corps still believed that the Polish forces were superior to the German forces and that they would defeat the Wehrmacht if necessary. Thus, the mood in Poland in the summer of 1939 also deceives the British and French. It deceives them into believing that their Allied partner Poland would be a factor of weight in the expected war with Germany. As late as mid-1939, the Polish war minister assured his French counterpart and the Polish ambassador in Paris assured the French foreign minister that if war broke out, it would be the Poles who invaded Germany first, not the other way around.⁷⁰ Two London Foreign Office officials traveling through Poland on a "fact finding mission" in May and June 1939 report in their travel log on meeting a department head of the Polish General Staff and other officers: "Partly from him, partly from the other gentlemen, I learned that they were thinking of attacking East Prussia at the beginning of the war because it would be difficult for the Germans to reinforce the province quickly and sufficiently ".... Later in the report it continues, "In any case, it seemed to be the general opinion that East Prussia ⁷¹ would have to be annexed by Poland." ⁷¹ Confidence in their own military strength goes so far that Polish newspapers print maps and ⁶⁹ Schneider, pages 205 ff ⁷⁰ Bonnet, pages 224 and 252 ⁷¹ Foreign Office, S.W. 1, 9th June 1939, Gladwyn Jebb 376 posters with the "historic

western borders of Poland" on the Elbe River in anticipation of a sure victory over Germany. Although the Poles see the slow health of their two neighboring countries, although they certainly take note of the military buildup in the Soviet Union and Germany and are driven by concerns for their own security, they continue to dream of new expansions. Their dreams are not hidden from the Germans as a result of numerous official and unofficial declarations. On October 9, 1925, for example, the GAZETA GDANSK reads: "Poland must insist that it cannot exist without Königsberg, without all of East Prussia. We must now demand in Locarno that the whole of East Prussia be liquidated...Should this not be done peacefully, then there will be a second Tannenberg..." This refers to the battle of 1410, in which a Polish-Lithuanian army defeated the army of the Teutonic Order and initiated its political downfall. In 1930, the Pilsudski-affiliated journal MOCARSTWOWIEC (The League of Great Power) wrote: "We are aware that war between Poland and Germany cannot be avoided. We must prepare systematically and vigorously for this war. The present generation will see that a new victory at Tannenberg will be inscribed in the pages of history. But we will beat this Tannenberg in the suburbs of Berlin. Our ideal is to round off Poland with the borders on the Oder in the west and the Neisse in Lusatia, and to annex Prussia from the Pregel to the Spree. No prisoners will be taken in this war. There will be no room for humanitarian sentiments. We will surprise the whole world with our war against Germany." In September 1930, three years before Hitler's seizure of power, Polish Foreign Minister Zaleski tells Dr. Ziehm, the president of the Danzig Senate, that only a Polish army corps could solve the Danzig question.⁷² In 1934, the Polish Academy of Sciences has picture postcards printed showing the Polish King Boleslaw Chrobry in front of a map of Poland showing Germany with East Prussia, Silesia, Pomerania, the Mark Brandenburg, and Lübeck as the western part of Poland. The printed text says: "In Poland lives the spirit of Boleslaw the Brave. The smallest dust of Polish soil returns to the motherland." ⁷³ ⁷² Miksche, page 66 ⁷³ Piekalkiewicz, page 50 377 / POLSCE ZYJE DUCK BOLESŁAWA CHROBRÉGO! POTACYFIAJDROBHIEJSZY PROCH ZIEMI POLSKIEI WRÓCI DO MACIERZY ⁷⁴ ⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ ⁷⁷ ⁷⁸ ⁷⁹ ⁸⁰ ⁸¹ ⁸² ⁸³ ⁸⁴ ⁸⁵ ⁸⁶ ⁸⁷ ⁸⁸ ⁸⁹ ⁹⁰ ⁹¹ ⁹² ⁹³ ⁹⁴ ⁹⁵ ⁹⁶ ⁹⁷ ⁹⁸ ⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰¹ ¹⁰² ¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴ ¹⁰⁵ ¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁷ ¹⁰⁸ ¹⁰⁹ ¹¹⁰ ¹¹¹ ¹¹² ¹¹³ ¹¹⁴ ¹¹⁵ ¹¹⁶ ¹¹⁷ ¹¹⁸ ¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰ ¹²¹ ¹²² ¹²³ ¹²⁴ ¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ ¹²⁷ ¹²⁸ ¹²⁹ ¹³⁰ ¹³¹ ¹³² ¹³³ ¹³⁴ ¹³⁵ ¹³⁶ ¹³⁷ ¹³⁸ ¹³⁹ ¹⁴⁰ ¹⁴¹ ¹⁴² ¹⁴³ ¹⁴⁴ ¹⁴⁵ ¹⁴⁶ ¹⁴⁷ ¹⁴⁸ ¹⁴⁹ ¹⁵⁰ ¹⁵¹ ¹⁵² ¹⁵³ ¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁵ ¹⁵⁶ ¹⁵⁷ ¹⁵⁸ ¹⁵⁹ ¹⁶⁰ ¹⁶¹ ¹⁶² ¹⁶³ ¹⁶⁴ ¹⁶⁵ ¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁷ ¹⁶⁸ ¹⁶⁹ ¹⁷⁰ ¹⁷¹ ¹⁷² ¹⁷³ ¹⁷⁴ ¹⁷⁵ ¹⁷⁶ ¹⁷⁷ ¹⁷⁸ ¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰ ¹⁸¹ ¹⁸² ¹⁸³ ¹⁸⁴ ¹⁸⁵ ¹⁸⁶ ¹⁸⁷ ¹⁸⁸ ¹⁸⁹ ¹⁹⁰ ¹⁹¹ ¹⁹² ¹⁹³ ¹⁹⁴ ¹⁹⁵ ¹⁹⁶ ¹⁹⁷ ¹⁹⁸ ¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰ ²⁰¹ ²⁰² ²⁰³ ²⁰⁴ ²⁰⁵ ²⁰⁶ ²⁰⁷ ²⁰⁸ ²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰ ²¹¹ ²¹² ²¹³ ²¹⁴ ²¹⁵ ²¹⁶ ²¹⁷ ²¹⁸ ²¹⁹ ²²⁰ ²²¹ ²²² ²²³ ²²⁴ ²²⁵ ²²⁶ ²²⁷ ²²⁸ ²²⁹ ²³⁰ ²³¹ ²³² ²³³ ²³⁴ ²³⁵ ²³⁶ ²³⁷ ²³⁸ ²³⁹ ²⁴⁰ ²⁴¹ ²⁴² ²⁴³ ²⁴⁴ ²⁴⁵ ²⁴⁶ ²⁴⁷ ²⁴⁸ ²⁴⁹ ²⁵⁰ ²⁵¹ ²⁵² ²⁵³ ²⁵⁴ ²⁵⁵ ²⁵⁶ ²⁵⁷ ²⁵⁸ ²⁵⁹ ²⁶⁰ ²⁶¹ ²⁶² ²⁶³ ²⁶⁴ ²⁶⁵ ²⁶⁶ ²⁶⁷ ²⁶⁸ ²⁶⁹ ²⁷⁰ ²⁷¹ ²⁷² ²⁷³ ²⁷⁴ ²⁷⁵ ²⁷⁶ ²⁷⁷ ²⁷⁸ ²⁷⁹ ²⁸⁰ ²⁸¹ ²⁸² ²⁸³ ²⁸⁴ ²⁸⁵ ²⁸⁶ ²⁸⁷ ²⁸⁸ ²⁸⁹ ²⁹⁰ ²⁹¹ ²⁹² ²⁹³ ²⁹⁴ ²⁹⁵ ²⁹⁶ ²⁹⁷ ²⁹⁸ ²⁹⁹ ³⁰⁰ ³⁰¹ ³⁰² ³⁰³ ³⁰⁴ ³⁰⁵ ³⁰⁶ ³⁰⁷ ³⁰⁸ ³⁰⁹ ³¹⁰ ³¹¹ ³¹² ³¹³ ³¹⁴ 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hand vis-à-vis Russia for all possible disputes with the German Reich in the West. The first test of Poland's new freedom of action comes five weeks after Hitler takes office. On March 6, 1933, Piłsudski reinforced Polish troops in the Free State of Danzig. He has a battalion of marines stationed on the Westerplatte at the entrance to the port of Danzig. Map 29: Danzig and the Westerplatte 75 Treaty of Locarno, Part II, Volume 4, page 114 380 The League of Nations had contractually granted Poland only a relatively modest guard force there for an ammunition depot. Thus, instead of a trial of strength with the German Reich, it comes to one with the League of Nations. The Polish soldiers had to be withdrawn. The second attempt to use Moscow's backing against Germany was of a much larger caliber. In 1933, Marshal Piłsudski makes three attempts to persuade France to launch a joint war of aggression against Germany. The attempts have gone down in the annals of history as "Piłsudski's Preventive War Plans." "Preventive" because the Polish marshal is thought to have intended to forestall the German Reich's efforts at the time to obtain a relaxation of the Versailles arms restrictions at the Geneva disarmament negotiations. The attempt of the German Reich government, still under Chancellor Brüning, to achieve such a change in the treaty, and the building up of a home defense force of the citizens of Danzig, are justification enough for Marshal Piłsudski to "punish" Germany, and this is to be assumed from further territorial gains. The first attempt to persuade the French government to wage such a war of aggression against Germany takes place in February or March 1933. Piłsudski discreetly sounded out the French to see if France was prepared to go to war in order to force Germany to comply with the Versailles

Treaty. France feels bound by the ban on aggression in the Kellogg Pact and does not accept the offer. The Polish attempt is later denied from Warsaw, but it does not go unnoticed. On February 17, the Polish envoy in Berlin, Wysocki, blabs when he has to discuss the replacements for the German military attaché in Warsaw and the Polish consul general in Königsberg with Meyer, the "head of the Eastern Europe department" of the Foreign Office. He asked "whether there was any point at all in filling these posts, since we were on the eve of a war between Germany and Poland. 76 After the war, the Historical Commission of the Polish General Staff also mentioned the Polish exploratory attempts in Paris. 77 The second Polish exploratory attempt in Paris in the direction of preventive war took place in mid-April 1933. Poland is just hit by anti-German riots. During the aforementioned period, the marshal has troops deployed. Cavalry is concentrated in Pomerania, in front of Danzig and on the border with East Prussia. Elite troops are withdrawn from Poland's eastern border and moved there as well. In the second half of April, Hitler is informed for the first time by Ambassador von Moltke from Warsaw of the Polish government's attempts to persuade France to 76 ADAP, Series C, Volume I, Document 22 77 Polish General Staff, 1951, Volume I, Part 1 381 a preemptive war against Germany. 78 With France showing no inclination to engage in a joint war alongside Poland against Germany without just cause, even after Piłsudski's second sounding, the Polish leader seeks another way to counterbalance the increasing weight of Germany as a neighbor. On November 15, 1933, he has the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, inquire of the German Reich government whether there is a way to provide Poland with reassurance against Germany after Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations. 79 Hitler offers Piłsudski a treaty of friendship and non-aggression. On November 24, German Ambassador von Moltke presents the draft treaty to the Polish Foreign Ministry. Then there is radio silence between Warsaw and Berlin for six weeks. During this time, Piłsudski tries for a third time to animate Paris to pre-empt a future rearmament of Germany through a preventive war. 80 When France again gives him the cold shoulder, the Polish head of state decides to change his foreign policy. On January 9, 1934, the German-Polish friendship and non-aggression pact was signed. Thus, for the time being, calm returns for four years. The Polish considerations to invade the German Reich and the three soundings with the French government would hardly have come about without the Russian-Polish treaty. With its own buildup of

troops and a simultaneous attack by France against West Germany, the Polish army could still have conquered East Prussia and Danzig in 1933 without further risk. The Westerplatte affair of 1933 and the Polish war probes in Paris that had become known had a twofold effect on the newly inaugurated Hitler. On the one hand, he now sought rapprochement with Poland, to which Germany would have been no match in a war in 1933. On the other hand, Hitler realizes that Poland will become a danger to Germany as soon as there is a conflict with France. And he registers that Poland disregards the Kellogg Pact, which precludes wars to resolve international disputes, when it is to its own advantage. When Hitler delivers the second and third of his famous "key speeches" to the Wehrmacht leadership in May and August 1939, he expresses exactly what he had experienced six years earlier when he had just taken office. Poland and the Western powers, who had been Germany's opponents in the war, not only play into each other's hands; Poland also drives against Germany. On August 22, 1939, Hitler said before the high generals: "It was clear to me that sooner or later there would have to be a confrontation with Poland. It certainly would not have needed these words of Hitler 78 Roos Preventive War Plans, page 361 79 Treaty of Locarno, page 126 80 Roos, Preventive War Plans, page 359 382 to enlighten the generals and admirals about Poland. The senior officers themselves knew at the time that Poland had always been lurking in Germany's rear since 1918, making gains at favorable opportunities, breaking treaties, and drumming up support in France for war against Germany. Poland's Alliance Policy The second pillar of Polish security policy is a network of treaties. First, France and the collective of victorious powers weave this web. The latter bind Poland to a minority protection treaty in order to defuse the predictable explosives created by the newly created minorities and to deprive the fatherlands of these minorities of grounds for later intervention or reconquest. Poland, as already mentioned, perceives this arrangement as discrimination and in 1934 denounces the treaty, which, however, is part of the Treaty of Versailles. In the literature, the Polish Minority Protection Treaty is therefore sometimes referred to as the "little Versailles Treaty." With this denunciation, Poland shakes the construction of the Paris Suburban Treaties for the second time. The first time was the non-recognition of the Curzon Line. The Polish governments thus dismantled a peace order to which they nevertheless repeatedly referred themselves; an order that might have protected Poland later. The Relationship Poland France Of the victorious powers, it is especially postwar France that spins a web of bilateral treaties to encircle postwar Germany. The sum of the small and medium-sized states of Eastern Europe that France binds against Germany through its network is called the "Little Entente" in reference to the First World War Alliance. Poland becomes France's main partner in this Little Entente against Germany. On February 19, 1921, the two countries sign an alliance treaty. The core of the treaty is the promise to stand by each other in the event of an unprovoked attack by third states. The treaty is supplemented on the same day by a secret military convention that regulates all the details of French support in the event of a German or Soviet attack against Poland.⁸¹ France's intention behind the treaties, however, is that Poland will support France with troops vis-à-vis Germany should France need them at some point.⁸² 81 Gamelin, Vol. II, p. 466 82 Taylor, p. 55 383 When the German government recognizes France's territorial gains from World War I in Locarno in October 1925, its interest in support from the Poles wanes. Paris replaced the previous alliance treaty of 1921 with a new, but weakened, guarantee treaty⁸³ that same month, reflecting the declining interest of the French. First, the new guarantee treaty no longer contains provisions to protect the Poles in the event of an attack by the Russians, and second, it ties the case for assistance in favor of Poland to a prior League of Nations decision. In 1936, when Hitler marched troops into the demilitarized Rhineland zone and thus restored military sovereignty in his own country, France felt too weak to prevent it. It no longer makes use of its possibility to activate the Little Entente for a "punitive action" against Germany. At the latest

From then on, Warsaw knew that Paris would no longer play the Polish card. Nevertheless, after the

German occupation of the Rhineland, the governments in Paris and Warsaw agree to consider the old alliance treaty of 1921 as valid again.⁸⁴ But already a few months later, in August 1936, it turns out for the Polish military that France's commander-in-chief Gamelin is no longer willing to make precisely outlined commitments on the type and timing of French intervention in case of a German attack against Poland.⁸⁵ From now on, there is no guarantee for Poland that France would oppose with all its might any German attempt to revise the German-Polish border demarcation when the opportunity arises. Between 1920 and 1934, there is a passionate argument in France about right and wrong, sense and nonsense of the clemence exchange Versailles policy. It is well recognized that the quarrel between the Germans and the Poles over Danzig and the Corridor is a work of their own "peace order." Politicians and the media publicly discuss what possibilities there might be to defuse this permanent risk to Europe's peace. Meanwhile, it is clear to the average Frenchman of the 1920s and 1930s that, in the event of war, he would not be willing to go to another war for Poland's interests. But official France continues to consider it wise and useful in foreign policy terms that it keep "a Polish foot in the German door." Relations between Poland and Great Britain did not assume the role of a "protecting power" of Poland until shortly before the beginning of World War II. After the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles, London's attitude toward Warsaw initially remained very distant for a long time. In England, it was quite clear that with the transfer of two million Germans to the new Poland, with the construction of the Free State of Danzig and the Polish land corridor between East Prussia and the Reich, the foundations for the next war had been laid. ⁸³ French-Polish Guarantee Treaty of October 16, 1925 ⁸⁴ Roos, *Planung Polens*, page 190 ⁸⁵ Roos, *Planung Polens*, page 192 and Gamelin, Vol. II, pages 230 f 384. Even as the victors were negotiating the fate of the vanquished at Versailles, British Prime Minister Lloyd George submitted a memorandum in which he prophesied, with an ugly dig at Poland: "The proposal of the Polish Commission to place 2.1 million Germans under the supervision of a people of a different religion, who have never in the course of their history shown themselves capable of stable self-government, must, in my judgment, sooner or later lead to a new war in Eastern Europe."⁸⁶ The distance London keeps from Warsaw

also feeds on minority politics in Ukraine. The large group of Ukrainian emigrants in British Canada ensures that the undignified treatment of Ukrainians in Galicia does not go unnoticed in England. Although England itself helped to elevate Poland to a maritime power in 1919 by providing a corridor to the Baltic Sea and port rights in the city of Danzig, it does not want to be permanently bound by this. According to Britain's calculations, Poland's new fleet will serve to bind parts of the Baltic fleets of the Soviet Union and Germany in future disputes in this inland sea, but England still does not want to give guarantees for the corridor and Danzig. London wants the new Poland to tie up the Soviets and the Germans, not England. Poland's head of state Pilsudski soon learns this. In 1925, during the Locarno negotiations, Pilsudski tries in vain to obtain a guarantee from the British for the German-Polish borders. In response, Foreign Secretary Chamberlain explicitly states that England will not guarantee these borders.⁸⁷ London's foreign policy on this issue obviously also reflected public opinion at home. The MANCHESTER GUARDIAN finds that England will never guarantee Poland's borders. And the TIMES writes that the new borders in Eastern Europe are no longer tenable. When Poland raises the question of guaranteeing its borders again at the September meeting of the League of Nations in 1927, it has to realize that the British government still does not want it. Instead, the political climate in Britain turned rather against Poland. Churchill, at the time a Conservative MP, says in a speech to the House of Commons on November 24, 1932, "If the English government really wishes to do something to promote peace, then it should take the lead and take the fra ⁸⁶ Burneleit, page 22 (Memorandum Lloyd George of 25. March 1919 entitled "Some Considerations for the Peace Conference before it finally fixes its terms.") ⁸⁷ Burneleit, page 33 ⁸⁵ ge of Danzig and the Corridor on their part again while the

victorious States are still superior. Unless these questions are resolved, there can be no hope of a lasting peace." 88 Churchill, too, sees that the status of Danzig and West Prussia-Pomerelia cannot be permanently maintained. Fourteen months after this Churchill speech, Hitler becomes chancellor of the German Reich. With the 1934 treaty between Hitler and Pilsudski, British interest in German-Polish relations dries up for a good four years. In 1938, with the German desire for the Sudeten Germans to return home to the Reich, Poland also returned to the focus of British foreign policy. Poland considers its claim to West Teschen as justified as the German demand for the Sudeten and demands the cession of the disputed territory. London initially showed understanding for Warsaw's wishes in the run-up to the Munich Conference, but it then refused to deal with them there. According to the consensus of the Munich Conference, Germany receives the old Habsburg territories of Czechoslovakia, the majority of which are German-populated. West-Teschen with only one third of Polish population, however, should remain in Czechoslovakia according to the will of the four conference powers of Munich. When Poland nevertheless annexes West-Teschen, London is outraged. This is the state of British-Polish relations a little less than a year before the start of the war. At that time, there was nothing to indicate that England would side with Poland in the German-Polish dispute over the Danzig, corridor and minority issues a year later and declare war on Germany on its own initiative. Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union is initially defined by the Riga Peace Treaty⁸⁹, in which the Soviets ceded parts of Belarus and Ukraine to Poland in 1921. For the Russians this remains an open wound, for the Poles a staging post. Marshal Pilsudski, who had in mind a new Poland within the borders of the old Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569, pursued a federation as the long-term goal of his foreign policy, in which Lithuania, all of Belarus, and all of Ukraine would be under Poland's rule as protectorates. All Polish governments therefore tolerate the government-in-exile of a non-existent Ukrainian republic in Warsaw.⁹⁰ In 1927, when the Soviet envoy Wojkov is murdered in Warsaw by an exiled Russian, Soviet-Polish tensions boil up to such an extent that both countries make preparations for war, which never comes 88 Kern, page 82 89 Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921 90 Roos, Polen und Europa, page 12 386 about. In 1929, Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov succeeded in persuading Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states to sign a regional "war pact" in anticipation of the Kellogg Pact, which had not been ratified by all countries by then. On February 29, 1929, they signed the "Litvinov Protocol," according to which wars between these states to resolve international disputes would be excluded in the future. Thus Poland, including its disputed territories in "Eastern Poland", is initially secured by treaty against Russia. From September 1931, with Japan's occupation of Manchuria, Russia's concerns shift to the Far East. The Soviet Union resumes earlier negotiations on a non-aggression pact with Poland. A treaty to this effect is initialed in Moscow on January 23, 1932, and signed in July. This Polish-Soviet nonaggression pact contains the provision, important for Poland, that in the event of a German-Polish conflict, the Soviet Union "may not give aid and assistance to the German Reich, either directly or indirectly, for the entire duration of the conflict." ⁹¹ Thus Poland is protected from the Soviet Union by another treaty. But even this treaty loses its effect in 1938, when Poland wrests the rest of the Teschen region from Czechoslovakia against Russia's warning⁹². The Soviet Union, also allied with Czechoslovakia since 1935, had previously threatened Poland, as mentioned above, to terminate the Polish-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in the event of a Polish attack on Czechoslovakia. Thus, with the annexation of Teschen, Poland violated and in effect annulled two treaties with the Soviet Union, the Litvinov Protocol of 1929 and the Non-Aggression Pact of 1932, both of which had once been offered to the Poles by the Soviets. While it is fair to say that the Soviets later failed to honor other nonaggression treaties, e.g., with Finland, Estonia, and other countries as well, and that the two treaties with Poland presumably would have been broken as well if necessary, the breach of the Litvinov Protocol clearly emanates from

the Poles. With this unauthorized land acquisition at the expense of their Czech neighbors, the Poles have also disregarded the Kellogg Pact, which has already been cited several times. They themselves tore up the treaties which could have protected their "Eastern Poland" from the Soviets. Poland hunts along as a shark in the shark tank until it is eaten itself. Poland's Relationship with Czechoslovakia The relationship between the neighbors Czechoslovakia and Poland remained cool and distant during the 20 years of their independence. Both countries are multiethnic states with similar problems of only weak loyalty 91 Roos, Poland and Europe, page 34 92 Soviet Note to the Polish Government, September 23, 1938 387 lity of their ethnic minorities. Both are therefore confronted with the desires of the mother peoples of their minorities. Both the Poles and the Czechs would therefore have had reason to close ranks. But a few contradictions separate the two neighbors. Firstly, Poland's demand for the Czechoslovak part of the Czech industrial area. Secondly, in the opposite direction, the open support of the Czechs for the independence aspirations of the Ukrainians in neighboring Polish Galicia. And that, thirdly, is the support of the Poles for the Hungarians who want to get back the Hungarian-populated peripheral areas of Czechoslovakia. Map 30: Outlying areas with Hungarian and Polish minorities Thus, in this area, everyone is pacting with the enemy of the neighbor instead of seeking balance and solidarity with the neighbor. Moreover, the Polish leadership, like the German leadership, came to the conclusion very early on that Czechoslovakia was not viable as a Versailles artifact and would break apart of its own accord as a result of the internal conflict between nations. When French diplomacy made attempts to involve Poland in an anti-German coalition in support of Czechoslovakia before the Sudeten crisis in 1938, it got the message. The French receive a cold rebuff. Poland's Foreign Minister Beck lets French Ambassador Noel in Warsaw know that "Czechoslovakia must disappear in the near future" and that Poland itself is preparing to "take a part of the 93 heritage. The Polish Ambassador in Paris, Count Lukasiewicz, gives the French Foreign Minister Bonnet information along the same lines. Lukasiewicz replies, * 93 Bonnet, page 41 388 "that Czechoslovakia, an arbitrary composite of numerous minorities extremely hostile to each other, is a country doomed to death. To defend it in spite of this was a grave error on the part of France and Great Britain." 94 With Poland's deployment of troops in Teschen, with the threat of war in the last week of September 1938, and with the occupation of West Teschen on October 1, Polish-Czech relations were finally ruined. Apart from the domino effect that this act would later have on Poland in the Soviet Union and the German Reich, Poland thus had another enemy. Poland's Relationship with the German Reich German-Polish relations have already been described in outline. In 1925, when Foreign Minister Stresemann crowns his efforts at friendship and reconciliation with France with the Rhine Pact and with recognition of the Franco-German border, Marshal Pilsudski tries to obtain the same concessions and guarantees for the German-Polish borders and for Poland's land gains. The German Foreign Minister rejects Pilsudski's wishes and openly declares that Germany will not start a war, but is waiting for an opportunity for a new settlement in the border regions. Poland, for its part, does not slacken in its efforts to detach Gdansk from the League of Nations mandate in small steps and with many dodges and to incorporate it into its own territory. Furthermore, the many semi-official and private voices from Poland do not want to fall silent, demanding Silesia, East Prussia and Pomerania for Poland. Thus, until 1933, the relationship of the two countries to each other is under the double mortgage of German claims to Poland and Polish desires for further German land. Only Adolf Hitler breaks with this rigid German attitude. He sees in Poland the land of an ancient people which, unlike the Czechs and Slovaks, has never in history belonged in its entirety to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. For Hitler, the state of Poland is a buffer between the "Third Reich" and the communist Soviet Union, which he hates so much. Although, or precisely because, after taking office, Poland tries to prevent Germany's resurgence with a preemptive war and with other machinations, Hitler offers the Polish dictator Marshal Pilsudski a pact of friendship

and non-aggression, signed by both sides in January 1934, a treaty for the duration of 10 years.⁹⁵ 94 Bonnet, page 41 95 D-PO Treaty of January 26, 1934. See Treaty Ploetz Part II, Volume 4, page 125 389 Fig. 11: Propaganda Minister Goebbels visiting Marshal Pilsudski after the signing of the German-Polish Treaty from left: envoy Count Moltke, Pijsudski, Goebbels, Polish Foreign Minister Beck. Pilsudski sees through the change of circumstances to Poland's disadvantage. He registered France's declining interest. With great concern he sees the rapprochement of the French with the Russians. He knows Hitler's alternative of forming a coalition with the Soviet Union instead of Poland. He is also aware that Germany's rearmament can hardly be prevented in the long run. Hitler, on the other hand, hopes to persuade Poland to make concessions if he significantly reduces Germany's revisionist claims and gives Poland backing for its eastern ambitions. Pilsudski, in fact, harbors his own desires for a Greater Polish federation with a semi-dependent Ukraine under Poland's domination. Hitler also has Ukrainian ambitions. He sees the part of Ukraine east of Poland's borders as a future colony for Germany. Both dictators know that this can only be done against the Soviet Union, and each hopes to use the other's "visions" in some way for himself at some point. Since the conclusion of the German-Polish agreement of 1934, relations between Berlin and Warsaw have been broadly positive. This remained so even after Pilsudski's death. Even with the Polish-German differences over minorities and territories, it looks in between as if 390 solutions are not out of the question. Francois-Poncet, France's ambassador in Berlin, reports as an observer of the scene: "Colonel Beck (Poland's foreign minister) was on intimate terms with Göring, and the latter accepted an invitation to hunt in the Polish forests every year. At these friendly meetings, of course, they talked about the Danzig question and the Polish corridor, problems that one day had to be solved in the interest of good relations between the two countries. Colonel Beck indicated that Poland would not refuse to return Danzig to the Reich if it retained economic prerogatives there. Also, Poland would agree to an extraterritorial highway and railroad between West and East Prussia." 96 The treaty with Germany gave Poland a free hand to acquire territory elsewhere. In 1938, when the Sudeten Germans wish to leave the state union of Czechs and Slovaks, the Polish government sees its chance coming. On September 20 and 24, 1938, it had Ambassador Lipski in Berlin ask first Hitler and then von Ribbentrop whether Poland could take advantage of the current Sudeten crisis and wrest the still Czech part of the Teschen region from ailing Czechoslovakia.⁹⁷ Hitler had no objection to this, but at the same time expressed the hope that an amicable agreement could soon be reached on the Danzig question as well. Poland then attacked Czechoslovakia, which was already torn apart and no longer able to defend itself, and annexed Teschen and its industrial region on October 1, 1938. What followed was a series of futile attempts by the Germans to solve the Danzig and corridor problems by negotiation. The core of the German compromise proposals is the offer to recognize as final the Polish territorial acquisitions of former German land from the years 1918 to 1921. These are territories in Upper Silesia, West Prussia and the province of Posen. Marshal Pilsudski had asked for this recognition several times in vain from 1920 until his death in 1935. The 16 Reich governments before Hitler had not wanted to fulfill this wish of the Poles. Hitler now offers the requested guarantee in exchange for two "barter objects": the annexation of the old Hanseatic city of Danzig, which is not Polish under international law anyway, back to the Reich and extraterritorial access routes to the separated East Prussia. The Reich government attempts negotiations six times in vain. The series of talks begins on October 24, 1938⁹⁸ and continues with more and more attempts on November 19⁹⁹, January 5, 1939¹⁰⁰, January 25 and 26¹⁰¹, on 96 Francois-Poncet, page 213 97 Rassinier, page 230 98 ADAP, Series D, Volume V, Document 81 99 ADAP, Series D, Volume y Document 101 100 ADAP, Series D, Volume Y Document 119 101 (No Minutes Known) 391 March 21¹⁰² and on April 28¹⁰³ until on August 30, 1939¹⁰⁴ the last offer is made to Poland. On October 24, 1938, three weeks after the Poles received Teschen and Oderberg, Foreign

Minister von Ribbentrop proposes to his Polish counterparts an eight-point program for resolving German-Polish problems. The eight points remain, with modifications, the basis also of the later German offers up to the one on August 30, 1939. They read: "1. the Free State of Danzig returns to the German Reich. 2. an extraterritorial Reich highway belonging to Germany and an equally extraterritorial multi-track railroad will be built through the corridor. 3) Poland retains an extraterritorial road or highway and railroad and a free port in the Danzig area. 4. Poland receives a sales guarantee for its goods in the Gdansk area. 5. the two nations recognize their common borders (guarantee) or mutual territories. 6. the German-Polish treaty is extended from 10 to 25 years. 7. Poland accedes to the Anti-Comintern Treaty. 8. the two countries add a consultation clause to their treaty. "105 Despite all previous efforts on both sides to keep relations with each other intact, an internal Polish development now begins to overtake the dialogue between the Polish and German governments. Beginning in 1937, the internal general weather situation in Poland changes. First, Beck's "understanding" with Germany is under attack. Secondly, the harassment of minorities reaches a new climax, and thirdly, the press in Poland shoots down everything German. This left Beck with virtually no room to maneuver on the Danzig question. On November 19, 1938, Ambassador Lipski informs Ribbentrop that his Foreign Minister Beck will not be able to agree to the German Danzig wishes for domestic political reasons. On the same day, Beck's official reply to the German proposal reaches Adolf Hitler. It is polite, but also noncommittal. Beck tries to escape a Danzig concession with the answer that one must look for an overall solution to all still disputed problems. The German proposal that Poland join the anti-Soviet Anti-Comintern Alliance as an additional member is also unacceptable to Warsaw. Poland, as a neighbor, cannot oppose Russia so openly without negative consequences. Thus, the "Anti-Comintern Proposal" does not appear in further German negotiation offers. 102 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 61 103 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 276 104 AA 1939, No. 2, Document 466, Annex II 105 ADAP, Series D, Volume V, Document 81 392 Even after this rejection from Warsaw, Poland would still have had the chance to negotiate a Danzig solution from the German side for certain concessions to its own advantage or, if worse came to worse, to accept a *fait accompli* with regard to Danzig even without its own territorial losses. Hitler still hoped for a negotiated solution. On January 5, 1939, Poland's Foreign Minister Beck visits the German Chancellor at the Alpine residence near Salzburg, on the Obersalzberg. Hitler still speculates on some gratitude for Oderberg and Teschen at this meeting. He makes the October proposal a second time, again offering recognition of the lost territories as Polish holdings. In return, he demands Danzig and extraterritorial transit routes.¹⁰⁶ Hitler sums up the Danzig proposal as follows: "Danzig will politically join the German community and economically remain with Poland." ¹⁰⁷ Even the corridor is to remain Polish. Again, the Polish foreign minister does not meet him halfway. But he assured Hitler that "he would, however, like to consider the problem once in peace".¹⁰⁸ They parted with the promise to continue looking for solutions. Peace was not yet lost. The German side made a third attempt on January 25, 1939, with a return visit to Warsaw by Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. This time, too, nothing moved that could lead to any progress on the Danzig question. And again, despite fundamentally different views, the door is not slammed shut. The final communique of the meeting speaks of a "consensus that both present and future questions of common concern to both states should be examined and resolved with due regard for the legitimate interests of both nations. "109 Both sides remain interested in getting along with each other. But the Reich government still seeks to alleviate the damage left by Versailles. It wants Danzig, and it is prepared to give up West Prussia, the province of Posen and eastern Upper Silesia for good. The Polish government, on the other hand, wants to maintain the status quo. It is also not prepared to accept the newly introduced formula "Gdansk will become part of Germany politically and remain with Poland

economically" as a compromise. Thus, even at the end of January 1939, no negotiated solution is in sight that could permanently end the German-Polish dispute. 106 v. Weizsäcker Papers, pages 153 and 511 107 ADAP, Series D, Volume V, Document 119 108 ADAP, Series D, Volume V, Document 119 109 Archiv der Gegenwart, page 3908 393 This January attempt by von Ribbentrop to resolve the Danzig question by negotiation was torpedoed by France. Only seven weeks earlier, von Ribbentrop had concluded the Franco-German Non-Aggression Pact, he had again renounced Alsace and Lorraine by treaty, and the minister had brought home the subjective impression of a "free hand in the East." Thus, during his January visit to Warsaw, von Ribbentrop could actually expect that France would not oppose his negotiations in Poland. But on the very first day of his stay in Warsaw, the French government interferes and makes it clear to the Poles that they can count on the full backing of the British and French with regard to Danzig. On January 26, well timed to coincide with Ribbentrop's visit to Beck, French Foreign Minister Bonnet delivers a speech on the broad outlines of his foreign policy to the Paris National Assembly: "... In the event of war, ... if England and France should be called in, all the forces of Great Britain would be at the disposal of France, and likewise all the forces of France would be at the disposal of Great Britain.... With regard to relations with Poland, it is enough to recall that the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, declared that Polish-French friendship remains one of the foundations of Polish policy."...110 Prime Minister Daladier stressed at the same meeting "that it was necessary to say a categorical no to the demands of certain neighbors." Since at the time Czechoslovakia had not yet broken up, and since the German Reich had not yet occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia, Bonnet could only be thinking of a conflict over Danzig when he spoke of war. Daladier's admonition to "oppose the demands of certain neighbors with a categorical no" in January 1939 can also mean only the Poles and not the Czechs. Thus, Bonnet's and Daladier's words are a blatant call to Warsaw to "oppose a categorical no" to German desires for Danzig. Nor is the mention of England's and France's readiness for war simply spoken on this day of Ribbentrop's visit to Warsaw. In January 1939, when Germany still demands only Danzig and the transit routes and offers in return the final renunciation of West Prussia, Posen and East Upper Silesia, France rejects such a solution. At this point, Germany could not have been punished for its occupation of Czechoslovakia. The French were clearly concerned with preserving the remnants of Versailles and preventing a final reconciliation of the Germans and the Poles. 110 Paul Karl Schmidt, pp. 64 f 394 Six weeks after the Warsaw meeting, an opportunity arises for Poland to openly repel German insistence in the future with England's backing. The chance opens up when, on March 16, 1939, Hitler marches German troops into the rest of disintegrating Czechoslovakia, and the German population in the separated Memelland demands annexation to the German Reich in a popular uprising. The latter plays a role because the Reich government then moves the three Wehrmacht divisions stationed in East Prussia north to the Memelland border five days later.111 Poland knows how to exploit both the Czech occupation and the German troops on the Memel border. Map 31: March 21, 1939 German troops march on the Lithuanian border Hitler annexes Czechoslovakia, the first time he has annexed a non-German country, and in doing so he acts against the expressed will of France and England to preserve Czechoslovakia as an independent state in East Central Europe. Poland's Foreign Minister Beck takes advantage of the British anger and asks the London government for a protective agreement against Germany. Poland's Marshal 111 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, Page 101 395 Rydz-Smigly simultaneously uses the transfer of German troops to the Memelländer border to make a dubious move. On the grounds that the Germans wanted to annex Gdansk, he mobilized a part of the Polish armed forces, called three years of reservists and thousands of specialists to the barracks, increased the army's troop strength by over 330,000 soldiers, and deployed combat units in the direction of Gdansk and Pomerania.112 Map 32: March 1939 Deployment of Polish troops to the borders of East Prussia and Pomerania This rapid and unanticipated move overlaps with the German foreign minister's next attempt

to reopen negotiations with Poland over Danzig's future. Von Ribbentrop sees the fermenting development among the Poles and tries to forestall a further escalation of anti-German sentiment there. On March 21, he asks Ambassador Lipski to go to Warsaw and convey to his government the official German request for new negotiations. This is now the fourth attempt by the German side to resolve the Danzig problem by negotiation. 112 Taylor, page 271 and Roos, *Planung Polens*, page 194 396 Almost at the same time, the Polish request for a treaty of protection is before London. The British agree, and Poland immediately switches to new practices toward Germany. Instead of negotiating the bilateral disputes as agreed in the German-Polish treaty of 1934, the Rydz-Smigly gesture now follows. Warsaw partially mobilized and deployed troops in front of the city, which Germany wanted to negotiate. This threatening gesture in response to a request for negotiations contradicts the spirit of the German-Polish treaty, in which the two parties agreed to resolve their disputes: "Under no circumstances, however, will they resort to the use of force for the purpose of 113 settling such disputes." 113 At the time, there is not a single threat to Poland on the part of the German Reich government. On March 26, 1939, Ambassador Lipski returned to Berlin and handed over a reply memorandum¹¹⁴ in which the Polish Foreign Minister conveyed that he was interested in good neighborly German-Polish relations and that they could talk to each other. But in fact the answer is a clear no to the two German wishes, garnished with diplomatic friendliness. In the Polish view, there could be no extraterritorial transit routes through Pomerania, and as far as Gdansk was concerned, the Polish minister proposed that the present status of the Free State be jointly guaranteed in the future. The explosiveness of the note lies in the exchange of words with which it is delivered. After von Ribbentrop has received and read the Polish memorandum, he tells Lipski that this answer to the German request is not a solution with regard to Danzig. He insists that the only viable course is the reintegration of Danzig into the Reich and extraterritorial transit routes. Lipski's response to this is that "he has the unpleasant duty to point out that any further pursuit of these German plans, especially insofar as they concern the return of Danzig to the Reich, would mean war with Poland." 115 Here the first threat of war between Poland and the German Reich emerges. And it is the Pole who utters it. Poland is counting on war to keep Danzig outside the Reich rather than clearing the way for Danzig's return. The threat of war, now repeated more often, is broad. The very "further pursuit of German plans," Lipski says, means war. So, strictly speaking, would be any further German offers of negotiations. Here Lipski, as the official spokesman for Poland, violates not only the spirit but also the text of the German-Polish Treaty. 113 Treaty Ploetz, page 127 114 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 101 and IMT Document, Volume XLI, Document 208 115 IMT Document, Volume XLI, Document 208, and AA 1939 No. 2, Document 208 397 The first threat of war on the part of Poland is printed and survives in the records of this conversation in the pre-war files of the Foreign Office (AA 1939) and in the files of the Nuremberg Trial.¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note that this threat is no longer to be found in the same record of the conversation, which was republished after the war in the "Akten der Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik" (AD AP 1956).¹¹⁷ An original of this record of such an explosive conversation of March 26, 1939, can no longer be found in the Foreign Office archives today. After Lipski's dangerous admission on the subject of war, von Ribbentrop replies, in view of the deployment of Polish troops on the edge of the Danzig area, "that, for example, a violation of the Danzig territory by Polish troops would be regarded by Germany in the same way as a violation of the Reich borders " This threat from the German side is printed in both versions of the quoted document. Thus, in the shorter postwar version of the "Akten der Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik," the German threat is the only one preserved. The threat of war first uttered from the lips of Lipski is not mentioned after the war. Accordingly, from March 26, 1939, both sides stated that changing or not changing the status of Danzig against their own interests meant war. Von Ribbentrop informs the "Führer" on the same day of the very harsh reaction from Poland. Hitler instructs the Minister to let the Polish

Ambassador know that on this basis, of course, no solution to the German-Polish differences can be found. Von Ribbentrop reports on this conversation that Hitler added the remark to the order: "Of course, there must be no talk of war here." 118 Beck, on the other hand, instead of likewise reassuring, adds one more on top. On March 28, he summons von Moltke, the German ambassador in Warsaw, to his ministry to tell him his view of the previous threats.¹¹⁹ He makes it clear to von Moltke that he is responding to the German foreign minister's statement to the Polish ambassador that "a Polish attack against the Free City of Danzig would be regarded by the Reich government as an attack against Germany" with his own statement, 398 116 IMT Document, Vol. XLI, Document 208 117 ADAP, Series D, Vol. VI, Document 101. 118 IMT Negotiations, Volume X, page 299 119 Polish White Paper, Document No. 64 398 "that any intervention by the German government for a change in the existing status quo in Danzig will be considered an attack against Poland." Von Moltke replied, "They want to negotiate on the points of the bayonets." The Polish minister thus officially reaffirmed that any change in Danzig along the lines of German wishes will trigger a war between Poland and the German Reich. It is now clear that Germany's only choice in the Danzig question is between abandonment or war with Poland. The door for a solution limited to Danzig, without touching Poland, has thus been slammed shut. Three days after the clear no from Poland, on March 31, 1939, the British government announces that Britain guarantees the integrity of Poland against Germany. This includes that Britain will fight Germany in case of a German-Polish dispute over Danzig. In the last days of March 1939, the announcement by the Poles that they would rather go to war than compromise, the provocative mobilization, and the intervention of England deprived Hitler of any further hope of reaching his goal in the Danzig question on his own. He now put the military option next to further negotiations and had an attack against Poland prepared. On April 3, Adolf Hitler gave the order for the "Fall of White". It is the order to the Wehrmacht to prepare an attack against Poland in such a way that it is possible from September 1, 1939. The political context for the instruction given is found in its paragraph I: "German relations with Poland continue to be governed by the principle of avoiding disturbances. Should Poland change its policy toward Germany, which has hitherto been based on the same principle, and adopt an attitude threatening the Reich, a final 120 settlement may become necessary." 120 Poland dances on the volcano from April 3, 1939. The eruption is announced for September 1. Hitler sees the mobilization as a response to a negotiating offer and the British-Polish Agreement, which is obviously directed against Germany, as a breach of the German-Polish Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty of 1934, which he therefore denounces four weeks later. Hitler pronounced the denunciation on April 27 in a memorandum to the Polish government¹²¹ and the next day in a Reichstag speech. In the memorandum and in the speech, he once again recognizes Poland's claim to West Prussia-Pomerania and its own access to the Baltic Sea. He offers to negotiate new treaty arrangements between the two states. This is the fifth German 120 OKW, Weisung "Fall Weiß" of April 3, 1939, see dtv-Hitlers Weisungen, page 19 121 ADAP, Serie D, Band VI, pages 288 ff 399 offer to finally settle the points of contention between Germany and Poland by treaties. Hitler did not threaten Poland with violent measures or war in a single word in the memorandum or in the Reichstag speech. The way to peace between the German Reich and Poland would still be open in the event of Danzig's return. In Poland, meanwhile, things were viewed completely differently. On May 5, 1939, Foreign Minister Beck justified his policy of maintaining the status quo and rejecting German demands before the Sejm, the parliament in Warsaw.¹²² The status of the Free City, he said, was not based on the treaties of Versailles, but on the city's centuries-long affiliation with Poland. Gdansk's wealth, he says, is the result of the foreign trade that Poland conducts on the Vistula through Gdansk's port. That the Vistula has silted up in the past 19 years under Polish administration, and that no ship sails there any more, he conceals. Beck asks the plenum of the

parliament what Germany has to offer Poland in exchange for Danzig. The offer of the German government,

to recognize all territorial acquisitions of former German territories by Poland after World War I as definitively Polish, is not an offer. The territories in question were "de jure and de facto¹²³ indisputably Polish" for a long time. Thus, the German demand for Danzig and for extraterritorial transit routes was nothing more than a taking without a return. The fact that Marshal Piłsudski had repeatedly asked the German imperial governments for precisely this recognition during his lifetime is suppressed by Beck in his speech. As a quintessence, Beck concludes, "A nation that respects itself does not make unilateral concessions." On the same day, May 5, the Polish government responded to the German denunciation of the non-aggression pact with a note.¹²⁴ It stated that Poland, first, wanted to negotiate, second, that Germany had always promised to respect Polish rights in Gdansk and that it should remain that way, and third, that the response Lipski had delivered in Berlin on March 26 had already accommodated the Germans. They had offered to jointly guarantee the continued independence of Danzig and had held out the prospect of further administrative simplifications on the transit routes. However, there could be no annexation of Danzig to the German Reich and no extraterritorial traffic routes. The Polish note of May 5, 1939, demands that Poland's rights in the Free State of Danzig be respected, but these are precisely what had been essentially guaranteed in the rejected German Danzig proposal. Furthermore, Poland demands in the note that Germany continue to observe the nonaggression pact of 1934, because the 122 British War Bluebook, Document 15 123 according to the legal situation and in reality ¹²⁴ British War Bluebook, Document 16 400 may not be terminated before the expiration of 10 years. The fact that the partial mobilization of the Polish Army and the deployment of troops at the gates of Danzig on March 24 were themselves violations of the 1934 agreement is passed over as far as possible. Moreover, in its note the Polish Government invokes the Kellogg Pact, which it has already broken four times itself. In essence, the Polish note of May 5, 1939, proposes nothing more than that Germany should guarantee Danzig's remaining outside the German Reich in association with Poland itself. Although Great Britain has clearly and openly sided with Poland in the Polish-German dispute since Hitler's breach of law with the rest of Czechoslovakia, there are also doubts there about the attitude of the Polish government. Thus, on May 4, 1939, the British Ambassador Henderson wrote from Berlin to his minister Lord Halifax in London: "... Once again the German cause is far from being unjustified or immoral ... My thesis has always been that Germany cannot return to normality ... until its legitimate demands have been met. The Danzig corridor question, together with the Memel problem, was one of these....According to my Belgian colleague, almost all diplomatic representatives here regard the German offer as a surprisingly favorable one. The Dutch envoy, the American chargé d'affaires, and my South African-¹²⁵ colleague have also spoken to me along these lines.... ". ¹²⁵ After Beck's dismissive reply note and his Sejm speech of May 5, Hitler realizes that the annexation of Danzig cannot be had without the threat of war and probably even without war with Poland. He decides to attack Poland "at the first suitable opportunity. "¹²⁶ Much to Poland's detriment, Adolf Hitler now turns away from his previous small Danzig solution and toward a large Poland solution. What is even more serious, from now on he includes Poland in his hitherto only vague ideas of the "living space in the East". In this Lebensraum concept, which had not been concretized until then, Poland had been a possible partner in Hitler's wishful thinking until May. Now Poland becomes a victim. Hitler addresses this for the first time in his speech to the top generals on May 23, 1939. What follows is like the slide down a slippery slope. In June and July 1939, the harassment of the minorities in Poland, the border incidents and the pressure from Danzig increase to such an extent that tension-free negotiations between the Polish and German governments are no longer possible. At the end of July, beginning of August, a dispute between Poland and the Danzig Senate over customs service in the Free State further strains German-Polish relations.

The 125 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume V, pp. 422 ff 126 Formulation from Hitler's "General's Speech" of May 23, 1939 401 Danzig Senate gives in on Hitler's advice, and Polish as well as French newspapers report that Hitler has fallen to his knees before Poland's firm stance.¹²⁷ The dispute now begins to slide psychologically as well. Hitler wants success. The prize now becomes a secondary matter. In the last weeks before the outbreak of war, Hitler tries to put a gun to the Poles' heads by openly threatening them. To this end, he uses talks through London, through the League of Nations' representative for Danzig, Professor Burckhardt, and through a Swedish mediator named Dahlems. The threats and British mediation move Polish Foreign Minister Beck to declare on August 28 that he agrees to new German-Polish negotiations on Danzig's future. But Beck evades German calls for talks in the days that follow. On August 30, 1939, at the

very last hour, Hitler made a new offer, as the Germans saw it, and a new demand, as the Poles saw it. Hitler still wants to get the British on his side and therefore leaves a bridge for the Poles to cross. The German proposal, hastily prepared by diplomats and lawyers, resembles the previous ones. It still demands the annexation of Danzig to the Reich. But it also calls for a referendum for the people in the so-called corridor. The relevant passages in the German proposal read: "2. The territory of the so-called corridor, ..., will decide for itself whether it belongs to Germany or to Poland. 3. to this end, this area will hold a vote..... In order to secure an objective vote ... this mentioned area, similar to the Saar area, will be subordinated to an international commission to be formed immediately by the four great powers Italy, Soviet Union, France and England. 4. the Polish port of Gdynia, which is basically Polish territory, shall be excluded from this area. 8. in order to guarantee, after the vote has been taken ... the security of free traffic of Germany with its province of Gdansk-East Prussia and Poland its connection with the sea, if the voting area falls to Poland, Germany shall be given an extraterritorial traffic zone.... given for the construction of a Reichsautobahn as well as a four-track railroad....If the vote is in favor of Germany, Poland will be given the same rights to free and unrestricted traffic to 128 its port of Gdynia. "128 127 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pages 212 and 217 128 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pages 482-185 402 Map 33: The German Proposals of August 30, 1939 This is the sixth and final offer from the German side. Hitler now leaves the Poles no more room to play for time. He sets a deadline for the start of talks. He "expects" Warsaw to send an authorized negotiator to Berlin by midnight on August 30, 1939. Foreign Minister Beck does not want to accept either the time pressure or the negotiating venue of Berlin. He instructs Lipski in the German capital not to accept the new German proposal.¹²⁹ One day and five hours after the proposed and "expected" date for the start of new talks has passed without result, the Wehrmacht marches into Poland. Although Hitler's last offer, which the Poles thus fail to take note of, worsens the basis for action for the Poles with the demanded plebiscite, ¹²⁹ Dahlems, Page 112 403 this time, too, the Reich government makes no demands for the formerly German territories in the province of Posen and in eastern Upper Silesia. Both Posen and East Upper Silesia would have been of great value to the German Reich as areas with rich ore and coal deposits. Even the "Corridor" voting area is shown in the proposal to be somewhat smaller than the former German province of West Prussia. Even though Hitler demands more from Poland with this last demand than in the previous five negotiating offers, he nevertheless claims little with it. His demand for a referendum in West Prussia-Pomerania is in line with the former demand of U.S. President Wilson for "popular participation in the settlement of any territorial and sovereignty problems "130 and with the proposal of the then British Prime Minister Lloyd George during the Versailles Victory Conference to let the inhabitants of the disputed territories vote in a referendum on their affiliation with Poland or Germany.¹³¹ Even Hitler's proposal for an international control commission for the referendum comes from Lloyd George. There are two interesting comments on this last proposal from Berlin. One is by the French historian Rassinier, who wrote after the war: "Had the French and British people known of these proposals on August 30,

Paris and London could scarcely have declared war on Germany without a storm of indignation. without provoking a storm of indignation 132 which would have enforced peace." 132 133 The second comment survives from the wife of the British Secretary of the Navy, Cooper. She finds the German proposal, when she hears of it, "so reasonable" that her husband is seized with horror. The idea that the British public might react similarly to Hitler's proposal prompts him to call the DAILY MAIL and the DAILY TELEGRAPH immediately and urge the editors to present the German proposal in as 133 unfavorable a light as possible. As a balance of Polish-German relations in the 20 years between the two wars, it can be said that Polish behavior was quite aggressive in the early years and then became defensive after Germany's recovery. As far as its own possessions were concerned, Warsaw insisted on the status quo created at Versailles. But this status contains too many differences with Danzig, West 130 Wilson speech of July 4, 1918 in Mount Vernon 131 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 482 132 Rassinier, p. 291 133 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 486 404 Prussia, Posen, East Upper Silesia and the treatment of the German minority in Poland for it to have endured in the long run. Poland, which has no qualms about using force to change the Versailles status quo with respect to Lithuania and the Soviet Union and with Czechoslovakia, defends its own status quo without the slightest compromise. Since Poland wants to maintain the status quo in the dispute with Germany, and Germany demands the changes, the buck finally stops with the German Reich. Nevertheless, Poland can draw no advantage from the fact that it is better off under international law with the *acquis* of Versailles 1939 than the German Reich with its wishes. It loses war and freedom despite its British guarantees for a whole 50 years. The Polish government had a different choice in 1939. It had the chance for an alliance with the German Reich without having to sacrifice its own territories. After all, Danzig, which is at issue, is not a part of the state of Poland. Poland could well have played its role as a free country as Germany's sovereign, small partner. Poland has acted several times in history as the "bulwark of the West" against Mongol and Magyar invasions. It could have been Hitler's initial idea to play this role again, this time in alliance with Germany against Bolshevism, which the Soviets wanted to export to the West at that time. In another role, the Poles could have secured their territory, freedom and peace, backing Germany. Hitler has been striving since 1933 to break the ring of anti-German coalition that France has closed around the Reich with the Little Entente. Hitler is not choosy about this. In his obsession with war with France and Great Britain, a quiet and allied Poland at his back would have been worth a lot.134 Not for nothing Hitler offers Poland a pact for 25 years. Poland in 1939 is itself a dictatorship like Germany, where the human rights of minorities apply as little as the human rights of Jews and "dissenters" in Germany. Poland's decision in favor of the Western democracies in 1939 is not a turning to kindred countries. It is first and foremost a pact with the enemies of its own enemy. It is also what the Poles in their egoism overlook at the same time an alliance with two countries that they twice abandoned in 1939 against Germany and in 1945 against the Soviet Union out of the same own egoism: France and Great Britain. 134 See Hitler's remarks recorded in the Hoßbach Protocol 405 Poland and the Kellogg Pact Another treaty that could have protected the Poles is the aforementioned Kellogg Pact135 of 1928, in which the United States, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Poland, Germany, and others declare "that they condemn war as a means of settling international disputes and renounce it as a tool of national policy in their mutual relations." (Art I) They agree: "that the settlement and decision of all disputes ... which may arise between them ..., shall never be sought otherwise than by peaceful means." (Art II) The stumbling block of the treaty for Poland is the preamble. It stipulates that "any signatory power which proceeds to war should be declared to have forfeited the advantages conferred by this treaty." After Poland tried to persuade France to go to war against Germany in 1933, and after it threatened first Lithuania and then Czechoslovakia with war in 1938, it is obvious that Germany and the Soviet Union would follow the recommendation and no longer allow the Kellogg Pact to apply to Poland. The Balance In the balance,

Poland has little to show in its favor in 1939. The foreign policy of constant advantage-taking without its own loyalty to the alliance becomes a "musical chairs" for Poland. It changes its place so often that in the end it has no chair left. After the new Poland had initially appropriated territories from four neighbors, it was dependent on treaties and allies. The patronage of the League of Nations and the sympathy of England wore Poland out quite quickly with brutalities against its minorities. France's love for Poland has been extinguished since Germany renounced Alsace and Lorraine. Warsaw has known this since 1933 at the latest. The Kellogg Pact has been broken so often that Poland can no longer expect any protection from it. The treaty with Russia was sacrificed in 1938 for 80,000 Poles in the Teschen region and half an industrial district. The treaty with Germany is disregarded when the German Reich government asks for talks about Danzig, Poland then calls up reservists and marches troops in front of Danzig. Germany does not even demand land that would be Polish under international law. The treaty that Poland concludes with England in return does not bring Poland any security. Britain wants to clip Germany's wings, not save Poland. When things got serious, Great Britain left the Republic of Poland first to the Germans and then to the Soviet Union. After almost two decades of new sovereignty, Poland stands on the shambles of its foreign policy in August 1939; three weeks later, it is a shambles itself. 135

Treaty Outlawing War of August 27, 1928, the so-called Kellogg Pact or Pact of Paris 406 Hitler's Poland Plans There are widely differing views on Hitler's intentions regarding Poland. One part of the historians is of the opinion that Hitler considered Poland as the first stage of his world conquest plans at a very early stage. Another part is of the opinion that Hitler did not have such far-reaching plans and inclines to the view that Poland had its chance to exist as a middle power alongside Germany. Hitler, according to this school, came to the decision to conquer Poland only very late. If one assumes that Hitler often deceived his environment, that he generally kept to himself what he thought and wanted, the truth about this is hard to fathom anyway. If, on the contrary, one inclines to the view that he was partly open and partly deceptive about what his intention was, the search for his plans for Poland is easier. Here let us try the second way. Hitler expresses himself in his book "Mein Kampf" still quite briefly and vaguely on the question of Poland. There are only two passages that he devotes to this subject. In his book, Hitler only criticizes the earlier attempts of the Austrians and the Prussians to Germanize their Polish minorities by trying to impose German as a language on the Poles. He describes that the "Germanization" only lasted where the affected land was settled by German peasants after the conquest.¹³⁶ This text in "Mein Kampf" is a reflection solely on the past. It lacks any reference to a revision of the borders that he envisaged or even to a later conquest of neighboring Poland. "Mein Kampf" cannot serve as evidence of an early intention on Hitler's part to encroach on Poland at a later date. In 1923, Hitler, who was only 34 years old at the time, explained in his book what moved him at the time. His strongly felt national identity played a major and, for him, guiding role. Hitler's national consciousness had developed in the multi-ethnic state of the old Habsburg, in which the Germans had meanwhile become a 23 percent minority alongside an otherwise Slavic and Hungarian majority. His ideas in the book "Mein Kampf" as a result of this revolve over and over again around the survival of Germanness in this now Slavic-majority environment. Thus, in 1923, Adolf Hitler sees world politics as a struggle of peoples for their place on earth. The experience of being a minority in his own country obviously left in Hitler an animosity against all Slavs, whether Polish, Czech or Russian. Even this does not allow the conclusion that Hitler was already thinking of war with Poland while writing his book. 136 Hitler, pages 297f and 429 f 407 10 years after "Mein Kampf" Hitler becomes chancellor. His first appearance before the commanders of the Reichswehr on February 3, 1933, four days after he himself had taken office, reflects the basic attitude described above. Here, the newly minted Reich Chancellor Hitler speaks to the top generals and, for the first time

For the first time, he outlined his program: the fight against Versailles, the rebuilding of the

Wehrmacht, and the promotion of the German economy and foreign trade. On the latter topic, he states that "perhaps new export opportunities would have to be fought for or perhaps, and this would probably be better, new living space in the East would have to be conquered 137 and ruthlessly Germanized." 137 With this reference, one involuntarily thinks today of the later conquest of the state of Poland. But Poland is not mentioned in the quoted speech. Thus, it remains open whether Hitler was already thinking about Poland in February 1933. For the generals present, Hitler's remarks on Versailles were a matter of course. They certainly heard the assurances about the reconstruction of a Wehrmacht with relief. The two heads of government before Hitler had already wanted to start with this. In view of the real conditions in 1933, the new chancellor's thoughts on the living space in the East probably seemed to the generals more like half-baked fabrications than a declaration of intent to be taken seriously. The general's concern at the time was the Reich's ability to defend itself and nothing more. Nevertheless, Hitler speaks here of Lebensraum in the East, but Poland is not mentioned. Next, one might have expected Hitler to continue the Polish policy of all his predecessors since 1918 and to take a hard line toward Warsaw. All the more so since Poland accompanies Hitler's assumption of office with the provocation of landing troops on the Westerplatte in Danzig and with an attempt to persuade France to wage a war of aggression against Germany. Hitler learns of Poland's war intentions in April 1933. 138 Now it is surprising how he reacts. Hitler, instead of paying back in kind, seeks peace with the Poles. In January 1934, a German-Polish nonaggression pact is concluded at Germany's suggestion. 139 The treaty renounces war as a means of dispute, but Germany keeps open later negotiated solutions for its own territorial demands. After Marshal Pilsudski's failed attempts to encourage France to go to war with Germany, Poland also relented. The two dictators Hitler and Pilsudski discover a partial convergence of interests, which then leads to a calming of German-Polish relations for the next five years. The regimes of Poland and the German Reich are quite close to 137 Jacobsen, page 81 138 Roos, Preventive War Plans, page 361 139 German-Polish Non-Aggression Agreement of January 26, 1934 408 the time in their national self-centeredness, in their authoritarian forms of rule, in their rejection of parliamentarism, in their anti-communism, and, regrettably, in their anti-Semitism. Hitler and Pilsudski see in Bolshevism a pressing danger for Germany, for Poland, and ultimately for all of Europe. Both have an interest in detaching the part of Ukraine that lies east of the Polish border from the Soviet Union. 140 Pilsudski has in mind a federation of his country with an all-Ukraine under the suzerainty of Poland. Hitler moves a distant goal that he has in mind for a later time, when Germany will have overcome the damage of Versailles. It is the compensation for the colonies lost in 1918 by a new colony in Ukraine. Thus, in 1933 and 1934, there are a few cautious and noncommittal soundings between Warsaw and Berlin about a possibility of proceeding together in Ukraine, but nothing more. 141 Hitler's behavior toward Poland from 1933 to 1939 represents a turn in German foreign policy toward the East. Governments before 1933 had always demanded that Germany's eastern borders be changed to the detriment of Poland. This included the possibility of corrections in West Prussia-Pomerelia and East Upper Silesia. One lever of this policy before 1933 had been the rapprochement of Germany and the Soviet Union. Hitler, on the other hand, seeks rapprochement with Poland and distance from the Soviet Union. Adolf Hitler also wants the revision of the borders, but he cuts Germany's demands from the outset to what he believes to be a minimum acceptable to Poland: the return of the city of Danzig, which is not part of the state of Poland anyway, and extraterritorial transportation routes through the corridor. Hitler hopes to persuade the Poles to make concessions on the Danzig corridor question if he gives them a free hand in Eastern Europe for their own ambitions. Hitler's miscalculation in this is to believe that the Poles will consider the renunciation of formerly German West Prussia and of a border correction in Upper Silesia a concession. What is a fair compromise in Hitler's eyes, the Poles perceive as an attack on their sovereignty, their territorial inviolability and their national dignity. Hitler loses his

illusions only when Warsaw, after agreeing to the Polish annexation of Oderberg and Teschen in 1939, does not show even a semblance of accommodation for Germany's Danzig wishes. This is also the point in time when Hitler again puts his faith in Moscow with regard to Danzig and the corridor. After the conclusion of the German-Polish Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty in January 1934, five years of German-Polish understanding and peace follow, even though the lot of the German minority in Poland continues to smolder between the two peoples. Hints of a change in Hitler's 140 Jacobsen, page 82.

Ukraine interests are misrepresented in Jacobsen as a solely German concern through a one-sided selection of documents. 141 Benoist-Mechin, vol. 7, pp. 179f 409 Poland policy are found again only in the speeches that the "Führer" gives secretly and before closed circles to the top generals of the Wehrmacht. On November 5, 1937, Hitler spoke for the first time to the generals and to his foreign minister von Neurath about war and about his plans to annex Austria to Germany and to annex the Czech Republic.¹⁴² 143 Poland, however, was mentioned only as a marginal problem. Hitler twice expresses the hope and expectation in the speech that Poland will remain neutral in Germany's wars with third states. Thus, there is no indication of any intentions on the part of the chancellor to take action against Poland at some point. On the same day, November 5, 1937, Germany and Poland conclude a new minority protection agreement. This, too, can hardly be interpreted as an indication of Hitler's later intentions against Poland. Two weeks after the general meeting, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Danzig are briefly discussed again. On November 19, the English Member of Parliament and later Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax visits Hitler at Obersalzberg in consultation with Premier Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Eden. He is to sound out what possibilities there are for cooperation between the German Reich and England. In the course of the conversation with Hitler, Halifax speaks of a "change in the European order which is

likely to occur sooner or later. These issues include Danzig and Austria and Czechoslovakia. England, he says, is interested only in seeing that these changes are brought about by peaceful developments¹⁴³ den. This conversation must make Hitler believe that England will not give him any trouble later in negotiations with Poland for the annexation of Danzig. After the annexation of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938, Hitler and his Foreign Minister von Neurath held a conversation on April 24, during which the dictator said that "he believed he had reached the height of his foreign policy success. At the time, Hitler obviously did not expect that he would be able to solve the outstanding Danzig question in the near future in the same way as he had solved the Rhineland problem in 1936 and the Austrian question shortly before. It seems that Hitler was under the illusion that he could come to an amicable agreement with Poland if he made due concessions. This impression also arises when one reads in the November 1937 speech just mentioned that Hitler sees a war with England and France coming in the years 1943 to 1945. Poland is for Hit ¹⁴² Speech of November 5, 1937, reproduced in the so-called Hoßbach Protocol. ¹⁴³ ADAP, Series D, Volume I, Annex to Document 31 ¹⁴⁴ v. Weizsäcker Papers, page 126 ¹⁴⁰ ler in 1937 and 1938 obviously still the insecure cantonist whom he would rather bind to himself and Germany than go to war with. This attitude evidently remained unchanged until the Sudeten crisis. On September 26, 1938, Hitler announced to a large audience at the Berlin Sports Palace: "We realize that here are two peoples who must live side by side and neither of whom can eliminate the other. A state of 33 million people will always strive for access to the sea. A way of understanding must therefore be found." ¹⁴⁵ In September 1938, as a result of the Teschen question, there is a rapprochement between Warsaw and Berlin. Hitler now hopes to receive thanks for support regarding Teschen and compensation for the concession to annex the predominantly German town of Oderberg to Poland. Hitler, who otherwise has an instinct for opportunity, fails to commit the Warsaw government to a Danzig solution on this favorable occasion. Instead, he relies with misplaced confidence on the now positive state of German-Polish relations and allows a few weeks to pass unused. Hitler and von

Ribbentrop ask the Polish government, first

tentatively and then directly and later urgently on October 24 and November 19, 1938, on January 5, 25 and 26, 1939, and finally on March 21 and April 28, to solve and settle the still open Danzig problem and the extraterritorial transit connections through the corridor by negotiation. The full text of Ribbentrop's first proposal to Lipski on October 24, 1938, has already been presented earlier in this book in the description of Polish alliance policy.¹⁴⁶ Already during the first two talks, on October 24 and November 19, Lipski let Ribbentrop know that Beck had no room for maneuver in domestic policy with regard to Danzig. On November 19 Beck politely but obligingly rejects the German wishes for Danzig. Hitler now has a solution prepared without Poland's blessing. On November 24, the "Führer" instructs the army to make preparations for a coup-like occupation of Danzig from East Prussia.¹⁴⁷ The route from East Prussia avoids German troops having to enter Polish territory. Hitler supplements his directive to the Commander in Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, with an oral explanation in which he says, "In any case, I intend to take this measure only if Lipski lets it be known that the Polish government does not wish to represent a voluntary surrender of Danzig to its people and

¹⁴⁵ Domarus, Volume I, page 925 ¹⁴⁶ ADAP, Series D, Volume V, Document 81 ¹⁴⁷ Directive of 24. November 1938, IMT Documents, Vol. XXXIV 411 ¹⁴⁸ would facilitate her situation by a 'fait accompli' ¹⁴⁸ created by Germany." ¹⁴⁹ Accordingly, in November 1938 Hitler was still hoping for a solution in which he could limit the conflict. A war with Poland is obviously not in his intention at that time. An intact Poland is too valuable to him as a buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union. Even at the beginning of 1939, it seems as if there could still be a solution in line with German wishes. The French ambassador in Berlin Francois-Poncet reports how he sees the state of affairs in January 1939: "Hitler suggested that an extraterritorial passage with highway and railroad be laid through the corridor so that East Prussia would have a direct connection with the Reich. Colonel Beck had stated that such a solution seemed acceptable to him." ¹⁵⁰ Von Ribbentrop's January 26 visit to Warsaw also still ends with a joint final communique that gives the appearance that the door to a negotiated German-Polish solution for Danzig remains open. Hitler assumes, from his point of view, that with the two minimal demands "Danzig and transport connections", with the renunciation of the formerly predominantly German Pomerelia and of border corrections in Upper Silesia, he is accommodating the Poles to such an extent that they cannot refuse him their hand in the long run. He also offers in return the aforementioned guarantee of the borders and the extension of the non-aggression pact for 25 years. Hitler also knows that no postwar chancellor before him has gone so far in "renunciation." He evidently feels himself to be a man of peace in this respect and toward Poland. But then comes Hitler's fall from grace with the Czech Republic in March 1939. The Polish government seizes the opportunity in a flash to switch fronts and get the guarantee of the British and French against Germany. Hitler obviously does not realize that it was he himself who opened the door for Warsaw to change sides. He is disappointed and gradually changes his further approach to Poland. Hitler now prepared to solve the Danzig question by force if not by negotiation. It remains unclear at what point Hitler really wants war with Poland, and whether he is not hoping for the Polish government to give in until the end. Many historians are of the opinion that Hitler intentionally started the war against Poland from the beginning of his reign, but at the latest from the beginning of 1939. They cite as evidence that he instructed the Wehrmacht on April 3, ¹⁴⁸ Accomplished Fact ¹⁴⁹ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 185 ¹⁵⁰ Francois-Poncet, p. 192 ⁴¹² 1939, to draw up a campaign plan against Poland.¹⁵¹ And they take from Hitler's so-called key speeches of May 23 and August 22, 1939, that this was his firm intention: war and not just Danzig's return to the Reich. There is a lot to be said against this opinion. On March 25, 1939, when Lipski is in Warsaw with the renewed German offer of negotiations, when Poland goes to England for the new promise of protection, when Hitler does not yet know that the door to German-Polish understanding over Danzig is about to

be slammed shut, on this March 25 he gives the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Colonel General von Brauchitsch, a new directive on conduct toward Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.¹⁵² Regarding Poland, it reads: "Danzig question: Lipski returns from Warsaw on Sunday, March 26. (He) Had orders to inquire there whether Poland was ready for an arrangement concerning Danzig.....Führer, however, does not want to solve the Danzig question by force. (He) Does not want to drive Poland into the arms of England by doing so. Polish question: For the time being, Führer does not intend to solve the Polish question. However, it is now to be dealt with....." It is further stated that a later attack against Poland would have to have favorable political conditions. From the same day, March 25, 1939, there is another note in the files of the German Foreign Office which shows that Hitler is still counting on a soft solution. There it is noted as "Instruction of the Führer": "Führer, however, does not want to solve the Danzig question by force. Does not want to drive Poland into the arms of England. A possible mil. occupation of Danzig would only be considered if Lipski let it be known that the Polish government could not represent a voluntary surrender of Danzig to its people, and would facilitate its solution through *einfait accompli* 153." 153 The chancellor had expressed himself in almost exactly the same way to Colonel General von Brauchitsch six months earlier.¹⁵⁴ The text of Hitler's directive of March 25, 1939, and the note in the files of the Foreign Office make it rather doubtful that Poland's eventual conquest was already the "Führer's" unconditional goal at that time. However, he considered it as a possibility in case of a massive provocation by Poland, which could not be excluded at that time. Hitler had not forgotten Poland's war soundings in France in 1933. 151 OKW, directive "Fall Weiß" of 3 April 1939, see dtv Hitlers Weisungen, pages 19ff 152 IMT-Dokumente Volume XXXVIII, page 247 The additions in parentheses are by the author. 153 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 99 154 Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 185 413 On March 26, Adolf Hitler learns of the Polish-British agreement and of the Polish rebuff on the Danzig question. If he had wanted war at any price, he could have found enough reasons in the partial mobilization of the Polish army on March 23, which was not provoked by Germany, in the simultaneous deployment of troops in the direction of Danzig, and in the attacks against members of the German minority in Poland, which had been increasing since the beginning of the year, to commit himself to an attack against Poland in his next instruction to the Wehrmacht leadership. Instead, with the instruction of April 3, 1939, Hitler gives the order for the "Fall Weiß" to carry out the processing of an attack plan against Poland in such a way that the attack is possible as of September 1, 1939. He leaves open whether it will come to that. Rather, following the issuance of this instruction, Hitler tells the Commander-in-Chief of the Army that he does not desire a conflict with Poland and that he has no interest in weakening Poland and thus supporting Ukrainian efforts for independence.¹⁵⁵ The text of the instruction is revealing in many ways: "Instruction 'Fall Weiß' 3 April 1939 I. The present attitude of Poland requires that military preparations be made, over and above the processed securing of the eastern border, in order to exclude, if necessary, any threat from that side for all time to come. 1. political conditions and objectives: the German relationship with Poland continues to be governed by the principle of avoiding disturbances. Should Poland change her policy toward Germany, which has hitherto been based on the same principle, and adopt an attitude threatening the Reich, a final settlement may become necessary...The political leadership regards it as its task in this case possibly to isolate Poland, i.e., to confine the war to Poland. 2. military demands: The major objectives in the buildup of the German armed forces remain determined by the antagonism of the Western democracies. The "Fall of White" forms merely a precautionary supplement to the preparations, but is by no means to be regarded as the precondition of a military confrontation with the Western opponents. 3. task of the Wehrmacht: The task of the Wehrmacht is to destroy the Polish Wehrmacht...." 156 The formulations show that this is an "advance directive" in case Poland reacts to a return of Danzig against its will with a

declaration of war 155 Miksche, page 69 156 dtv Hitlers Weisungen, pages 19 ff 414. The Polish Ambassador Lipski had issued the threat to this effect a good week before before the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop "ex officio". Attack plans and orders on stock are quite common in the 20's and 30's in Europe.

as the famous Foch plan for the attack of the French and the Poles against Germany demonstrates. The Weisung for the case of Weiss also shows that Hitler's ideas about the use of the Wehrmacht in the long run do not point in the direction of Poland. The Wehrmacht armament is still directed toward Hitler's "foreseen" confrontation with the two colonial powers in the West. After Hitler has given the instruction for the "Fall of White", he submits his offer to the Polish government one more time on April 28, 1939: "1. Danzig returns to the framework of the German Reich as a Free State. 2. Germany will receive a road and a railroad line through the corridor at its own disposal. In return Germany is prepared: 3. to recognize all the economic rights of Poland in Danzig; 4. to secure for Poland in Danzig a free port of any size and with completely free access; 5. thus to accept and accept finally as given the frontiers between Germany and Poland; and 6. to conclude a twenty-five-year non-aggression pact with Poland." 157 This offer, too, does not help Hitler a yard. This is followed by his so-called key speech of May 23 to the commanders-in-chief of the Wehrmacht units.¹⁵⁸ Even this speech to the generals, which is often cited as evidence, does not necessarily suggest that Hitler had already made firm plans at the end of May 1939 to invade Poland in September. From the speech, phrases such as "The question of sparing Poland is therefore omitted, and what remains is the decision to attack Poland at the first suitable opportunity." And "Danzig is not the object in question. For us it is a question of the expansion of living space in the East." were used as evidence of Hitler's firm determination to attack Poland. But the overall context of the speech indicates otherwise. Hitler has summoned the commanders-in-chief and chiefs of staff of the Wehrmacht components to see him in order to announce to them the establishment of an independent study staff at the Oberkom 157 Domarus, Vol. II abridged from page 1162 158 Domarus, Vol. II, pages 1196 ff. 415 mando of the Wehrmacht (OKW). He knows that this new competing enterprise will meet with little approval from the general staffs of the Wehrmacht components. Hitler therefore explains the necessity of such a staff with the requirements of modern warfare in the future. To justify this, he presents his thoughts on possible wars in Europe. This primarily concerns Germany's position vis-à-vis its adversaries England, France and the Soviet Union. Poland only plays a role in Hitler's argumentation as a satellite of the British at Germany's back. Speech passages such as: "The Pole is not an additional enemy. Poland will always be on the side of our opponents" and "The aim must be to inflict one or the devastating blow on the enemy (meaning here England 159) at the beginning... This is only possible if one does not slip into a war with England through Poland." Rather, they indicate that Poland was not yet the focus of Hitler's considerations in May 1939. These sentences are the reflex to Poland's change of sides two months before this speech. The speech of May 23 is aggressive, but it deals with a later confrontation with England, once it is a question of reclaiming one of the lost colonies from the British or substitutes for it in the Ukraine. The concern of this speech is the new study staff at the OKW. The main theme to justify this staff is a later confrontation with England feared by Hitler. Poland, despite the drastic phrases, is not the point at issue. But Poland is now and this is new on Hitler's "hit list". At the end of the speech Hitler says that the Wehrmacht must be ready for war in 1943 to 1944. There is no mention of Poland or 1939. If the May speech shows one thing with regard to Poland, it is Hitler's realization that his policy of cooperation has failed. From now on Poland is no longer a potential partner for him, but a potential opponent. Until the summer of 1939, Hitler did not threaten war either publicly or through diplomatic channels. To date, only his demand for negotiations around Danzig and the connections through the corridor is in the air. Alongside the Danzig question, in 1939, there was another German-Polish problem that aroused a great deal of anger among

the German public. Throughout the year, the situation of the German and Ukrainian minorities in Poland, which had already been anything but satisfactory, deteriorated. State Secretary von Weizsäcker, then Deputy Foreign Minister in Berlin, writes on this subject: 159 Author's Note 416 "Our diplomatic and consular reports from Poland showed how in 1939 the wave was rising higher and higher, covering the original problem, Danzig and passage through the corridor." 160 During the summer, tensions between the Reich and Poland intensified at an ever-increasing pace and further drama.¹⁶¹ A series of incidents and exchanges of fire occurred on the borders. Riots against members of minorities are now commonplace. In Galicia, a wave of arrests against Ukrainian individuals is underway. "Disloyal and anti-state" Germans are transported by the thousands to Inner Poland and concentrated in camps. Polish companies dismiss workers with German as their mother tongue en masse. Young Germans are not given jobs. A large number of German firms are forced to close by order of the authorities. In many cities, German stores are boycotted. Even Polish soldiers parade "under arms" in front of the stores as boycott posts. In Upper Silesia, Poland closes the small border traffic and ten thousand German commuters are cut off from their jobs. To make matters worse, Polish naval and coastal artillery fire on civilian Lufthansa passenger planes over the open sea in three instances. Added to this is the growing nervousness of the population in Gdansk. The demonstrations of the Gdansk citizens for their reunification with Germany do not want to end. In July and August, a wave of refugees from the "Volksdeutsche" to Germany begins, which increases day by day, as it did shortly before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. On August 17, more than 76,000 refugees were counted at the Polish-German border and another 18,000 on Gdansk territory. The situation is boiling so high that the Danzig question and the problem of minorities cannot be postponed any longer. In Poland, too, people are deeply angry with Germany and the German-speaking population in their own country. The Reich is increasingly dealing directly with the Danzig authorities instead of following the diplomatic route through the Polish Foreign Ministry in Warsaw as required by the Danzig Statute. The German minority, like the Ukrainian minority, was also accused of being disloyal to Poland and an enemy in their own country. After five negotiation initiatives from the German side in the fall, winter and spring of 1938/39, all of which remained unsuccessful, Hitler apparently decided in late spring 1939 to solve the bundle of German-Polish problems with a war if necessary. Hitler knew that a campaign could not begin too late in the year because of the autumn weather that was common in Eastern Europe. Rain, mud, and fog would otherwise hamper the movements of ground troops and, with some probability, preclude the use of air power. Thus 160 v. Weizsäcker Memoirs, page 242 161 The following is taken from the Stader Tageblatt July-August 1939 and the documents on the prehistory of the war from AA 1939 No. 2, documents 349 to 437 417 Hitler, when he speaks of the possibility of war, also always refers to the end of August or the beginning of September. On August 12, Hitler announces to Count Ciano, the Italian foreign minister, that he will attack Poland after the next provocation. When Ciano inquires, Hitler's answer is: "At the end of August." ¹⁶² What continues to hinder him into August is the attempt by the British and French to commit the Soviets into an alliance against Germany. By his own admission, Hitler would not have dared to strike Poland with the Soviet Union in the opposite camp.¹⁶³ But when the Soviets came over to the German side around August 20, and when Hitler and von Ribbentrop succeeded in concluding a non-aggression pact with Stalin and Molotov on August 23, the date of an attack against Poland was also fixed for Hitler in the event that Warsaw remained intransigent on the Danzig question. On August 22, 1939, he assembled the army group and army commanders of the three branches of the Wehrmacht at Obersalzberg and announced his intention. The speech he delivers on this occasion is his third so-called key speech, already mentioned. He says that he had originally expected a war against the Western powers. Now, however, "he must first turn his attention to Poland." The speech contains the following words: "The relationship

with Poland has become intolerable. My proposals to Poland on Danzig and the corridor were disrupted by the intervention of England. Poland changed its tone toward us. The state of tension is intolerable in the long run. Now is a more favorable time than in two or three years." 164 Hitler also mentions that he had made the decision to attack as early as the spring of 1939. If he is telling the truth here, this is the time after Poland's swing into the camp of the British and French. In the last days before the beginning of the war, Hitler keeps wavering. Sometimes he declares that he now bets on war, sometimes that he still hopes for the Polish government to give in. Thus, on the morning of August 24, he confided privately to Secretary of State von Weizsäcker that he believed England would drop Poland after all and that Warsaw would concede what he demanded.¹⁶⁵ After the Soviets switched to the German side, this hope was no longer entirely unjustified. Hitler is bent on success and obviously not necessarily on war. It would also have been a success in his eyes to solve the Danzig question and the transit problem with the move of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and by threatening to march 52 army divisions alone ¹⁶² Domarus, Volume II, page 1226 ¹⁶³ v. Weizsäcker Papers, page 181 ¹⁶⁴ Jacobsen, page 99 ¹⁶⁵ v. Weizsäcker Memoirs, page 253 ⁴¹⁸ without going to war. This solution would have continued the series of his previous successes in a way that was domestically advantageous to him. Adolf Hitler had by this time repeatedly boasted to himself that he had succeeded in the occupation of the Rhineland, the repatriation of the Sudetenland, Austria and the Memel region, and even the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia without war or bloodshed. Even in the last four days before the Wehrmacht moves to attack Poland, Hitler does not withdraw his offer of "Danzig for peace." At first it is still the old offer, Danzig and transit routes in exchange for recognition of Polish territorial gains from 1920 to 1923 at the expense of Germany. On August 30, Hitler raises the price for Poland. In the last offer already mentioned, which the Polish representative no longer accepts, Hitler demands, in addition to Danzig and the transit routes, a plebiscite in West Prussia-Pomerelia. According to Hitler's new proposal, the majority of the population there would be the deciding factor as to whether the area would rejoin Germany or remain Polish. Even this proposal, based on the now internationally recognized rule of the right of peoples to self-determination, is still moderate. Finally, Hitler urges that Poland give what it refused to negotiate for a year. Hitler wants Danzig or war and Poland chooses war. After the war, it has been argued that Hitler made his last offer of negotiations, demanding a referendum in West Prussia-Pomorskie, only as a pretense of a non-existent intention. He had not seriously sought a peaceful solution to the conflict in the last days before the war, but had wanted war with Poland at any price. The last compromise proposal to Poland makes this assumption rather unlikely. If Hitler had wanted war at any price, he would have raised the demands on Poland so high that even England could no longer have advised the Poles to negotiate. Above all, he would not have allowed German-Polish and German-English negotiations to continue until the afternoon before the outbreak of war. There is also an indication from the time of the campaign against Poland that Hitler had accepted the war with a high risk, but had not counted it in with certainty. Lieutenant Colonel von Vormann, an army liaison officer in Hitler's entourage, describes his evening monologues, in which he tried in a small circle to make himself clear about his next steps. Von Vormann reports from his time in Poland: "Hitler often talked for many hours about the future shape of the Polish state. He was by no means clear to himself what he actually wanted. Nor did he wrestle his way to any decision." ¹⁶⁶ ¹⁶⁶ v. Vormann, page 14 ⁴¹⁹ Hitler's perplexity at this time suggests that he did not actually have Poland on his mind in the fall of 1939. Otherwise, he and his advisers would have had a concept for a defeated Poland ready long ago. The sequence of Hitler's actions and reactions in the last year before the start of the war suggests, despite all his bellicose rhetoric, that the dictator only reached for the "big Poland solution" after the failure of a "small Danzig solution. The long path from the proposal for negotiations, through the preparation of a Danzig hand coup, through

further proposals for negotiations, through the preparation of a contingency plan for war against Poland, through urgent demands on the Polish government, through the request to England to help in the Danzig and transit question, to the attack against Poland does not allow the conclusion that Hitler wanted to conquer and dismember Poland from the very beginning. Adolf Hitler spoiled his own chances of bringing Danzig home diplomatically when, against his promise, he had the rest of Czechoslovakia occupied and declared a protectorate in the spring of 1939. He obviously never admitted this strategic, political and moral mistake to himself. Rather, he considers himself a victim of the infamy of the Poles, who first take Oderberg and Teschen and then, instead of giving something in return, defect to the enemy. Hitler would certainly have brought the Danzig question and the transit problem to a successful conclusion without that capital Czech mistake and with more patience, even without war, because Poland's positions in this matter are on very weak footing historically, ethnographically and in terms of international law. Hitler's attitude towards Poland would not necessarily have led to war with Poland. But in the end it is obviously no longer primarily the Danzig question that drives Hitler to the wrong haste. It is the overpressure in Poland's minority kes-sel that makes things escalate. In this respect, the summer of 1939 bears a strong resemblance to the spring of 1999. The treatment of the Germans and Ukrainians in the multiethnic state of Poland stirred up the minds in Germany in 1939 in the same way that 60 years later the repression of the Serbs against the Albanians in the multiethnic state of Yugoslavia stirred up the people of Europe to indignation. The aggravation of the situation of the German minority and the refusal of the Poles to negotiate further about Danzig drives Hitler to the wrong and fatal solution in August 1939. He triggers the Second World War.

Roosevelt's Role in the Dispute over Danzig

At the turn of 1938 and 1939, German-Polish talks are still ongoing. At the time, both the French and the British show virtually no inclination to wage another war for the benefit of Poland and to the detriment of Germany. For one thing, they are just relieved to have peacefully settled the German-German dispute over the Sudeten Mountains. On the other hand, in October 1938, against the declared will of the British and French, the Poles had encroached on Czechoslovakia and taken the Western Czech industrial area. In complete contrast to this sentiment, the impression is created that Roosevelt was intent on driving Europe into war after all, despite the Sudeten settlement that had just been reached. William Bullitt, Roosevelt's ambassador and personal confidant in Paris, conveys this impression when he gives Professor Burckhardt, the League of Nations High Commissioner for Danzig, his assessment of the further development of the Danzig affair on December 2, 1938. Burckhardt noted the conversation in his diary: "He explained to me with strange satisfaction that the Poles were prepared to go to war over Danzig..... In April the new war will break out. Never since the torpedoing of the Lusitania¹⁶⁷ has there been such religious hatred of Germany in America. Chamberlain and Daladier will be blown away by public opinion. This is a holy war . ." ¹⁶⁸ Bullitt's words were backed by action. On January 4, 1939, Roosevelt has the entire U.S. fleet run from the Pacific through the Panama Canal to the Atlantic side for maneuvers in the Caribbean. On the same day, he requests another \$1.3 billion for armaments in Congress, and what is at the time a clear signal he asks members of Congress to repeal the U.S. neutrality laws or relax them.¹⁶⁹ He is denied the latter. The armaments money, the fleet at the entrance to the Atlantic, and the attempt to throw off the shackles of the neutrality laws are three signals to Germany, Poland, Britain, and France. Roosevelt leaves no doubt that he is willing to prevent further dismantling of the postwar Versailles order, that he disapproves of the annexation of Danzig to the German Reich, and that he will intervene against Germany in the event of a war over Danzig. The three threatening

gestures of January 4, 1939, are certainly not without influence on the ongoing German-Polish talks, which are to enter their third round on January 5. In October 1938, the Poles had taken West Teschen with Hitler's approval. He could then count on a certain concession on the part of the Polish

government in the Danzig question. The first German-Polish negotiations in October and November 1938, as already reported, were inconclusive, but the way of negotiation was still open. The day before the third German attempt to settle the problems surrounding Danzig and the corridor, on that January 4, 167 The torpedoing of the *Lusitania*, carrying ammunition for England in addition to passengers, by a German submarine contributed to the American declaration of war on Germany in 1917. 168 Burckhardt, page 225 169 Bavendamm, *Roosevelt's War*, page 375 421 Roosevelt the Poles that Germany had a powerful adversary to contend with. In February 1939, Roosevelt also succeeds in undermining the ongoing Anglo-German negotiations on a trade treaty by making his own offer, which rules out a Anglo-German treaty. The American

President thus both impeded a rapprochement between London and Berlin and damaged the German economy. Roosevelt's massive and unequivocal appearance around the turn of the year from 1938 to 1939 did not fail to have the effect it was intended to have on the steadfastness of the Poles toward Germany and the courage of the British toward Germany. On March 15 follows the invasion of German troops into the rest of Czechoslovakia and with it Hitler's first clear breach of the peace. From now on, Roosevelt tightens his net around Germany. The first of his many steps, the increase of all tariffs against goods from the German Reich, has already been mentioned. On the 19th, the British State Department asks the American to continue naval cooperation between the two countries and to move the U.S. Navy to Hawaii in the Pacific. On the 23rd, Roosevelt agrees to both, thus freeing the British Pacific Fleet for deployment in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. As a further step, on the 20th the President has a bill introduced in Congress to revise the neutrality laws. On the same day, England's first offer goes to Poland to guarantee its security. When negotiations on the nature of the guarantee stall, Roosevelt influences Chamberlain's resolutions. On the 26th, the President sends American Ambassador Kennedy to London to see Chamberlain and have him point out the danger that an inadequate guarantee by the British would have for the Poles and for peace.¹⁷⁰ Roosevelt, still prevented by his Congress from intervening directly, here sends Chamberlain and England ahead. The British prime minister assures the American ambassador that England will stand on Poland's side and defend it should Hitler start a war over Danzig. Five days later, on March 31, Chamberlain pronounces the guarantee for Poland. As an observer of the scene from the other side of the Atlantic, the German chargé d'affaires at the embassy in Washington, Hans Thomsen, reports on March 27 to Minister von Ribbentrop. March to Minister von Ribbentrop in Berlin: "The rallies and actions of the American Government in recent weeks indicate more and more clearly that President Roosevelt's claim to leadership in world political affairs is culminating in the goal of destroying National Socialist Germany by all available means Roosevelt is convinced in his innermost being, that Germany is the enemy who must be destroyed because she has seriously disturbed the balance of power and the status quo of¹⁷⁰ Bavendamm, *Roosevelt's Road to War*, page 529 422 kind, that America will suffer the consequences if she does not succeed in playing the preventive¹⁷¹ game. " ¹⁷² On April 14, Roosevelt writes the letters already mentioned to Hitler and to Mussolini, demanding guarantees for 31 named states. On April 19, even before Hitler has responded to his demand for guarantees for the 31 states¹⁷³, the President lets the British government know that he considers it indispensable for England to introduce universal conscription. On April 28, the corresponding bill is passed in the House of Commons. The French also receive indications that America is on their side in case of conflict with Germany or Japan. On April 15, the American naval attaché informs the French naval command in Paris that Roosevelt could order the American navy into the Irish Sea or to the Philippines without asking Congress if there were any knowledge of warlike plans by the Axis states.¹⁷⁴ In this indirect way, France is also offered its support against Germany in the Atlantic or against Japan off French Indochina. At the end of June 1939, Roosevelt fails Congress, which is unwilling to lift the arms embargo against belligerent nations and

soften the neutrality laws. The President thus remains committed to keeping the U.S. out of a war among nations in Europe. Nevertheless, the President's position is clear and firm. He opposes the authoritarian regimes in Japan, Germany, and Italy. He sees in the rise of the three aforementioned states a great risk to the moral, economic, and naval strategic leadership he claims for America. And with regard to Germany, Roosevelt considers the status of the city of Danzig as a League of Nations mandate, the separation of East Prussia from the Reich through the Polish Corridor, and the extension of Poland to include the majority German-populated parts of West Prussia as the just and lasting solution established at Versailles. Thus, he encouraged the Poles, British and French not to give in to Germany's demands. The Soviet Union's Relationship with Germany Another participant in the "great game" over Danzig, beginning in the spring of 1933, was the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's relationship with Germany was determined in ever-changing ways, sometimes tactically according to the obvious necessities and sometimes strategically according to Moscow's long-term goals. Thus, after 1918, Soviet Russia is initially the world's pariah as a Bolshevik state and 171 Präveniere = Zuvorkommen 172 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, pages 107 f 173 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Path to War, page 573 174 Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Path to War, page 572 423 bump as the war loser Germany. Accordingly, both pariah states conclude the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 in order to break their isolation, from which they both suffer, and to help each other economically. This was followed in 1926 by the Treaty of Berlin, a treaty of neutrality for a period of five years. The two agreements of Rapallo and Berlin allow, among other things, the already described cooperation between the Soviet Army and the Reichswehr, which opens up training and testing possibilities for Germany's military and gives the Russians their share of learning. But the tactical advantages for both sides cannot obscure the contrasts between the systems. For the Bolsheviks, Germany is a "capitalist" country like England or France and, as such, a state in the enemy camp. In 1920, Lenin defines the strategic relationship of the Soviet Union with these states, and Stalin will adhere to it in 1939. On December 6, 1920, in a keynote address to high officials of the Moscow organization of the Russian Communist Party/the Bolsheviks, Lenin states, "Until the final victory of socialism throughout the world," the basic rule applies, "that it is necessary to exploit the contradictions and antagonisms between two imperialist power groups, between two capitalist groups of states, and to set them on each other." If it is impossible to defeat both, "one must know how to group one's forces so that the two come into conflict with each other. But as soon as we are strong enough to throw down the whole of capitalism, we shall 175 immediately seize it by the throat." 175 Thus, for Lenin, Germany as a "capitalist and imperialist" state is in principle in the enemy camp, despite all economic and military cooperation. Stalin will take his cue from this in the summer of 1939 when he tries to entice first the British and French and then the Germans into a war against each other. Poland's reassurance with France shortly before the start of the war Paris never lets its threads to Warsaw break. Even during von Ribbentrop's visit to Poland in January 1939, when the latter was trying to negotiate over Danzig, Prime Minister Daladier and Foreign Minister Bonnet encouraged the Polish government in their already quoted National Assembly speeches to "oppose the demands of certain neighbors with a categorical no". The French relationship with the Poles, which had nevertheless cooled down, warmed up again in the spring of 1939. On March 16, 1939, Hitler, as mentioned 175 Topitsch, pages 39 f, quoted there from Lenin, Werke, vol. 31, Berlin (East) 1964, pages 434 424 424 breaks his Munich promise and makes the rest of Czechoslovakia a protectorate. This is reason for the Poles, British and French to fear that the German Reich government will also take over Danzig in the near future. Poland, which has officially declared several times that the annexation of Danzig would be tantamount to a declaration of war, now does not want to get out of this junket and asks England and France for a promise of guarantee for itself. On March 25, 1939, London gives the promise. On March 31, Paris also made the requested guarantee to Warsaw. On May 15, the Polish Minister of War, General Kasprzycki,

travels to Paris to discuss with his French comrade, General Gamelin, how France will support Poland in a possible war. The general result of the talks is a mutual promise to take joint action against Germany in the event of war. Poland holds out the prospect of inflicting the greatest possible losses on the German Wehrmacht and not admitting defeat before the start of Franco-British operations in the west. As soon as the Wehrmacht

itself is battered so the Poles, East Prussia is to be attacked.¹⁷⁶ For his part, the Frenchman Gamelin promises air strikes against Germany in the first days of a war, limited army operations beginning on the third day, and a French offensive with 40 army divisions beginning on the 15th day of General Mobilization in France.¹⁷⁷ On May 19, the meeting of the two war ministers ended with a written agreement committing the French army to an offensive against Germany beginning on the 15th day.¹⁷⁸ The French text reads "avec les gros de ses forces," which Gamelin interpreted after Poland's defeat as "with about a third of its forces".¹⁷⁹ The Polish text reads "swymi glównymi silami", which means "with the main forces". What is significant for Germany here is that the promise of a French attack against Germany applies even if Poland is not attacked, but only the city of Danzig is annexed to Germany.¹⁸⁰ On May 31, 1939, two weeks after the Franco-Polish conference of war ministers, from which the Poles took home such far-reaching promises, General Gamelin writes the directives for the future commander-in-chief of the French front on the Rhine and Moselle.¹⁸¹ This directive then no longer mentions offensives against Germany. It states: ¹⁷⁶ Roos, Planning Poland, page 198 ¹⁷⁷ Rassinier, page 266 ¹⁷⁸ Piekalkiewicz, page 45, likewise Deighton, page 105, likewise Roos, Planning Poland, page 199 ¹⁷⁹ Gamelin, Volume II, page 421 and Roos, Planning Poland, pages 198 f ¹⁸⁰ Piekalkiewicz, Page 45 ¹⁸¹ From "Guidelines of the Chief of the General Staff for the Future Commander-in-Chief of the Northeastern Theater of War on Possible Operations between the Rhine and Moselle," see Gamelin, Servir Volume II, pages 426 f, the parenthetical notes are by the author. ⁴²⁵ "This engagement itself will have two phases: a. In the first phase, it will be a matter of possibly throwing back the enemy from the national (meaning French) territory; then of working our way up to his position of resistance (meaning the German)..... b. In a second phase, ..., it would be a matter of reconnoitering those sections of the German position on which one can then concentrate all efforts, using our existing means." Gamelin thus reveals that even in May 1939 he had not envisaged relieving Poland in a war with Germany by attacking strong forces. His promise to that effect to the Polish Minister of War, Kasprzycki, is thus merely bait for the Poles to risk war over Danzig. On August 23, 1939, the day of the conclusion of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the French Cabinet takes stock of its finances to determine whether it can fulfill its alliance obligation to Poland without Russia's help. The minutes of the meeting reveal the thoughts of General Gamelin, the French chief of staff, a week before the "alliance case" with Po-len.¹⁸² The French commander-in-chief must know at the time that the German army has a total of 106 active and reserve divisions and Poland has a combined 52. He also knows that the Polish air force is inferior to the German. Nevertheless, Gamelin presents this calculation to the assembled ministers: "France can counter 200 German divisions with about 120 of its own. Therefore, it must maintain the support of the 80 Polish divisions The Polish army will honorably resist the German one. Cold and bad weather will quickly bring the hostilities to a halt, so that the battle will still continue in the east in the spring of 1940. At that moment, the French army will be reinforced by numerous British divisions landed on the mainland. In the spring of 1940, therefore, France will be able to count on 240 divisions, which will make up the 120 French, 80 Polish and about 40 English divisions together. If, in addition, Germany should violate Dutch and Belgian neutrality, this would bring an additional 30 Dutch and Belgian divisions to our side, making a total of 270 Allied against 200 German divisions." ¹⁸³ This calculation by Gamelin reveals three facts that are unflattering to France. First, the minister thus admits that the French ¹⁸² Minutes of General Decamps of August 23, 1939,

Bonnet, page 266 183 Bonnet, pages 265 f 426 army will not rush to the aid of the Polish until the spring of 1940 and not after 15 days as promised by General Kasprzycki in May 1939. Secondly, Gamelin reveals here that his purpose in the May agreement was to enlist 80 Polish divisions for a future French war against Germany. At the time of the French promise, on May 19, there had been no German threat against Poland and thus no legitimate reason for France to wage war against Germany. Third, it becomes apparent that Gamelin informed his ministerial colleagues in Paris, even before the war began, that such an early relief offensive to help Poland as had been promised was not at all planned. It would now have been the duty of Bonnet, the Foreign Minister, to warn his Polish colleague Beck against taking too hard an attitude toward Germany's Danzig demand. Instead, Gamelin made the Poles confident of victory with the promise of a two-front war against Germany, Bonnet let them stew in their false belief although he knew better, and both let the Poles run to their doom with their eyes open. France uses the Poles for its own national interests in 1939. Paris sees in another war the chance to reduce Germany again to Versailles level and to punish it for the Czech occupation. The French government goads Poland to remain stubborn on the Danzig question, knowing full well that war will result. Gamelin also immediately presents his desired scenario at the August 23 cabinet meeting. He expected a Europe-wide war with France and Poland on one side, followed by Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands, and Germany on the other. In the summer of 1939, France deliberately goes to war. On September 1, 1939, the Wehrmacht moves against Poland. On September 3, Paris declares war on Berlin. France breaks its promise, does not lead an offensive against Germany and lets the Poles go down. Gamelin tries to explain this later in his memoirs by saying that the Poles had mistranslated the military agreement of May 19, 1939. He had never promised to go on the attack against Germany with France's 184 main forces.¹⁸⁴ Poland's reassurance with England shortly before the start of the war Even in October 1938, British-Polish relations were frozen. Poland had annexed Teschen against England's will. But with Hitler's Czech coup d'état in March 1939, Poland suddenly became the focus of British interest again. When Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia, breaking his Munich pledges, London, Moscow, and Paris feared that the German dictator had ambitions beyond the return of Danzig. London knows very well that after the return of Danzig, the colonies that Great Britain took from Germany in 1919 would eventually have to be returned. England therefore wants to put an end to the further course of the revisions in time, and the German dispute with Poland over the Free State of Danzig is suitable for this. Thus, from now on, England relies on Poland. The Polish Teschen misstatement is thus awarded without further comment. On March 20, four days after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, London offers Warsaw a protective treaty against Germany and proposes to take France and the Soviet Union on board as additional guarantor powers.¹⁸⁵ For Warsaw, this is a godsend for further defense against all German wishes for Danzig. But Poland wants to avoid the Soviet Union becoming its own protecting power in this way, and strives to keep the Russians on the outside. The Polish government therefore asked the British for a bilateral protection agreement against Germany.¹⁸⁶ It argued that the negotiations to conclude a Quadruple Alliance would take too long and that France had guaranteed the security of Poland since 1921 anyway. The British would certainly have been justified in sharing responsibility for Poland's security with the Soviet Union, but an entirely different event, a political rumor in London, puts spin and haste into the talks with the Poles. At the same time as the German invasion of Czechoslovakia, a Romanian delegation was negotiating in London to obtain British government loans for Romania. The head of the delegation, the diplomat Tilea, uses the consternation of the English over the fate of the Czechs to redirect their concerns to Romania. He claims that Germany is about to invade Romania as well. As implausible as this is because of the 400 kilometer distance that lies between Germany and Romania, the Romanian hits the British in a very sensitive spot. The majority of all shares for the Romanian oil fields are in British possession at the time. Thus, this

Romanian rumor sets the British public abuzz. The London, Paris and New York newspapers carry the false news of the German attack on Romania around the world in one day. The rumor does its work, although it is officially denied by the Romanian Foreign Minister Gafencu already the next day, on March 18.¹⁸⁷ While England is still trying to win France, the Soviet Union and Poland for a quadruple alliance against Germany, Warsaw takes advantage of the mood created by the Romania rumor. Polish Foreign Minister Beck urges his British counterpart, Lord Halifax, "in view of the rapid

185 Memorandum from the British Foreign Office to the Polish Government, March 20, 1939, see Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume IV, pages 400 ff 186 Inquiry of March 23, 1939, see White Paper of the Polish Government, Document No. 66,

pages 93 f 187 Rassinier, pages 232 ff 428 of events" to dispense with time-consuming negotiations and conclude a British-Polish protective agreement without delay. Foreign Secretary Halifax, who knows by now that the Rumania rumor is not true and that there is as yet no threat from Germany against Poland, goes along

with it. On March 31, 1939, Lord Halifax issues a declaration of guarantee for Poland before the House of Commons in London.¹⁸⁸ The piquant thing about this patronage of the British over Poland is that it comes about out of annoyance at Hitler's handling of Czechoslovakia. What was not quite realized in London was that Poland itself had tried to divide Czechoslovakia by force six months earlier. On October 24, 1938, Beck had asked Hitler whether the eastern part of Czechoslovakia, the so-called Carpatho-Ukraine, could not be cut off and given to Hungary.¹⁸⁹ Poland and Hungary were allied at the time. Hitler does not agree with this in October 1938. Thus, Britain henceforth "protects" the Poles because Germany has raided the Czech Republic, where previously Poland was not allowed to raid the Czech Republic itself because of Germany's veto. On April 3, 1939, the Polish Foreign Minister travels to London to get the British guarantee of March 31 in writing and to supplement it with a Polish one. Both sides now assured each other that they would stand by each other in the event of a direct or indirect threat from other states.¹⁹⁰ The exact scope of the assistance and aid was reserved for a later "permanent agreement". However, this agreement was not concluded until August 25. On April 7, 1939, a completely different event aroused the emotions in Europe and in the USA: Italy attacked Albania. On April 13, France and England respond with a joint guarantee of independence for Greece and Romania. On April 15, U.S. President Roosevelt follows with the aforementioned telegram to the German and Italian governments. He demands an assurance from both that they will not attack 31 named states in Europe.¹⁹¹ From April 24 to May 4, delegations from the general staffs of France and England meet for a conference in London. The topic is to be the guarantee for Poland, but almost all of the talk is about British-French cooperation in the event of war. The debates and agreements revolve primarily around sea routes, colonies in North Africa and the Far East, and bases from Gibraltar to Singapore.¹⁹² Poland is only one stone in the

188 British War Bluebook, Document 17 189 Roos, Poland and Europe, pages 383 f 190 English-Polish Communique on the Meeting of Polish Foreign Minister Beck in London, April 6, 1939, see Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume V, pages 35 f 191 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document No. 200 192 Minutes of General Lelong, 5 May 1939, AA 1939/41, No. 6, Document 1 429 Mosaic of the Two Great Powers. The British General Staff holds out the prospect of sending 6 infantry divisions to France in the course of the first six weeks of the war, plus 10 territorial divisions in half a year and another 16 in the first year. In sum, this amounts to 32 divisions in support of France against Germany, not 40 as General Gamelin reported to the French Cabinet a little later. The use of the British fleet is considered in the talks only in connection with a war against Japan and Italy. There is no mention of direct British aid to the Poles. For England, the spring of 1939 is obviously about preparing for a global confrontation with its rivals. The Polish guarantee from London is recognizably a political signal to keep Germany away from Danzig and from

Poland. It is not, as the Franco-British talks show, an offer to intervene immediately and on the ground in Poland's favor. This flood of guarantees is not only a warning, it is also at the same time an enticement. As much as Germany and Italy must now reckon that none of their further violent steps will go unanswered, the protection tempts the Poles to take an uncompromising stand against Germany in the future. Already during the Polish-British talks, on March 26, Lipski, returning from Warsaw, conveys to the German Foreign Minister a clear no to the German Danzig proposal. He adds, as already mentioned, that there will be war with Poland if Germany continues to pursue its plan to reclaim Danzig. This first threat of war from the mouth of a Polish diplomat might not have occurred if the Polish government had not been able to count on England and France waging war alongside Poland. Hitler's first order to go to war against Poland, after all, came only a week after the Polish ambassador's threat. The British guarantee has another counterproductive effect. Poland's new harsh rejection of a return of Danzig to the Reich shows Hitler that the path of negotiation is obviously no longer open to him. Hitler still believes that England will drop Poland in the crisis, and he offers Poland another "Danzig for quid pro quo" deal on April 28, but he also realizes at this time that further talks with Poland under England's umbrella are all but pointless. England's March 1939 guarantee destroys the last chances of narrowing the German-Polish dispute to Danzig and the extraterritorial transit routes. With England's backing, Poland can make the homecoming of Danzig a *casus belli*.¹⁹³ If Germany wants Danzig, she must henceforth wage war with Poland. Lord Halifax's promise to the Poles in March 1939 is exactly the same as Kaiser Wilhelm II's promise to the Austrians in July 1914 that "Germany will stand by Austria-Hungary in her customary loyalty to the alliance." It is a blank check for Poland.¹⁹³

Occasion for War 430 British Ambassador Henderson, seeing from Berlin the danger posed by England's backing of the Poles, wrote in a report to London on July 18, 1939: "Hitler may already believe that England intends to go to war with Germany in any case. If he does not yet believe it, not much is lacking to bring him to such an opinion. ... Nor, let us be honest, do I think it politically wise or even fair to incite the Poles unduly..."¹⁹⁴ When nothing could be done at the negotiating table, Hitler set himself a date, probably in April 1939, for the return of Danzig to the German Reich. When Poland remains firm with the certainty of British and French arms assistance, Hitler tries to pull the lever again in London, Paris, and Moscow. After a failed British-French attempt on August 19, 1939, to commit the Soviet Union to an alliance against Germany, Hitler takes advantage of the new situation on August 25. He offers the British government an alliance in return for London's help in recovering Danzig and the Corridor. In return, Hitler offered a guarantee of Poland's new borders and German help in defending the British Empire wherever it might be needed in the world.¹⁹⁵ But in London, there was now a firm resolve to support Poland's position on the Danzig question. The disappointment over Hitler's actions toward the Czech Republic is too deep-seated there. There was no confidence in the new promise of a guarantee of Poland's borders. On the day of Hitler's offer, August 25, London and Warsaw conclude the mutual assistance agreement that Beck and Halifax had promised each other in London on April 6. Article 1 of the new protective agreement repeats the April pledge that in the event of an attack by third countries "we shall immediately render all aid in the power of the assisting party." Article 2 of the treaty, however, extends the old promise of assistance quite considerably. It says: "Article 2 (1) The undertakings given in Article 1 shall also apply in the event that a European State undoubtedly threatens, directly or indirectly, the independence of a Contracting Party and that the Contracting Party in question considers it necessary to resist it with its armed forces."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ 194 ¹⁹⁵ 194 ¹⁹⁶ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VI, Document 347 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, pages 233 ff British War Bluebook, Document 19 431 Thus Great Britain undertook to intervene even if Poland considered it necessary to resist with armed forces in the case of an "indirect threat." With this formulation, it is up to Warsaw to decide when an indirect threat, whatever it is,

becomes a case of war. This is a license for Poland to declare German pressure to annex Danzig to the Reich an "indirect threat" and to react to it militarily. Even in such a case, England would have to support Poland immediately with all the forces at her disposal, according to Article 2. In this way the British government binds itself to the foreseeable decisions of the Polish. It is as good as impossible that the British, with their experience of the world, should carelessly and unintentionally formulate the text of the mutual assistance agreement in such an expansive way. With their wide-ranging guarantee they are destroying the last small chance for a concession by the Poles on the Danzig question. Since Poland has long since declared that a change in the Danzig Statute means war, and since Germany has announced that as of September 1939 she will annex Danzig even without Poland's consent, it is clear that the Danzig Statute will not be changed.

Poland's consent, England's promise of protection is nothing more than a declaration of participation on Poland's side against Germany in the war, which is now as good as certain thanks to its own intervention. The protective treaty of the British of August 25, 1939, stands in remarkable contrast to the last-minute mediation activity of the London government in the days that followed. In the last days before the start of the war, Britain was mediating at a door which it had de facto locked itself. If one considers the British-Polish mutual assistance treaty of August 25 alone and disregards the British mediation attempts that followed, one gets the impression that the British government worked with sophistication toward the outbreak of war at the end. With the "Danzig case", the motive could have been the cleverly contrived and yet, according to appearances, not self-inflicted "case of war", in which Great Britain, with the help of the Poles, the French and the Americans, could

put an end to the increase in power of the German Reich. With such a war, Hitler's demands for the return of the former German colonies would then also be eliminated. With the promise from London in its marching baggage, Warsaw is now no longer prepared to take even a single step toward Germany on the Danzig question, even a week before the start of the war. Poland rejects Germany's claims to Danzig and the transit routes through the corridor under German sovereignty and therefore, in reliance on Great Britain, abandons the partnership with Germany that has grown up since 1934. In making this switch, the Polish government is relying on a British interest in Poland's fate that does not in fact exist. Thus, Poland switches to the anti-German camp in 1939, sealing its lack of freedom for the next 50 years. 432 A Secret Additional Protocol, which the British and Poles signed as a supplement to their mutual assistance agreement, provides information about England's interests. The Secret Additional Protocol of August 25 specifies that the concluded alliance is valid only against Germany.¹⁹⁷ Thus, England does not have to protect Poland from the Soviet Union when the latter does what is obvious. In view of the Soviet danger, which threatens the Poles just as much as the German danger, the additional protocol makes it clear that England wants first and foremost to put an end to Germany's rise to power and not primarily to protect Poland. When the Red Army invaded Poland on September 17, 1939, and annexed "eastern Poland," the British government took note without consequence. The failed British-French-Soviet rapprochement In the 1930s, England and France watch with growing unease as Germany regroups domestically, economically, and militarily. At the time of the Austrian Anschluss and the annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938, both countries feel unable to put a military stop to German demands. In the case of Austria and the Sudeten, the right of self-determination of the peoples and 1000 years of common history also speak in favor of the demand of the Germans, Austrians and Sudeten Germans. The unease of the British and French, however, is not lessened by the legitimacy of this policy of "home to the Reich." The Soviet Union, initially not threatened by the German Reich, has other plans and problems. Since World War I, it has been largely kept away from political participation in Europe. At the Munich Conference, it is even excluded by England, France, Germany and Italy. Thus Russia, sometimes with French and English support, sometimes with the help of Germany, tries to find

its way back onto the stage of major European politics. Russia's immediate goal is to regain the White Russian and Ukrainian territories east of the Curzon Line, conquered from Poland in 1921. The distant goal is to spread Marxism to Western Europe. The road to both goals always leads across Poland. Both goals, Stalin estimates, could one day fall to the Soviet Union as ripe fruit, without further effort, as the result of a European war among the capitalist states. Stalin 197 Documents of International Affairs 1939-1946, Volume 1, page 471 and Michaelis, pages 506 ff 433 hopes that at the end of such a war Europe, with weakened states, impoverished populations, and battered armies, would become an easy prey to Marxist revolution and Soviet expansion. Here Stalin resembles Hitler, who, as the Hoßbach Protocol records, initially also expected wars in Europe without the participation of Germany. Thus, in early 1939, the Soviet Union seeks its way back onto Europe's grand stage. In almost simultaneous talks with the Western powers on the one hand and with Germany on the other, it tried to improve its starting position for later territorial and influence expansions. The occupation of the Czech Republic on March 16, 1939, provided Stalin with a welcome opportunity to do so. With Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia, German foreign policy left the ground of its legitimate claims and went poaching. The answer is not long in coming. On the very day of the German invasion of the Czech Republic, March 16, 1939, France's Foreign Minister Bonnet proposes Franco-Soviet consultations to the Soviet ambassador in Paris. He suggests that they discuss joint measures in the event of new actions by the German side against an Eastern European country. On the 18th, Soviet Foreign Minister Litvinov responds with a similar proposal to the governments in Paris, London, Warsaw, Bucharest, and Ankara.¹⁹⁸ The very next day, British Foreign Secretary Halifax follows up with a corresponding note to his French, Polish, and Soviet counterparts. Halifax now tries to arrange a French-English-Polish-Soviet alliance of four against the German Reich. But Poland, as already described, does not want to risk Soviet patronage and destroys the first attempt by the great powers to reach an agreement. The result is not only the British guarantee to Poland of March 31, mentioned earlier. Poland subsequently also thwarts another attempt by the British and French to get the Soviets into the anti-German boat for the next war. Although the Soviets negotiate an alliance with the British and French against the German Reich in the spring and summer of 1939, they keep the back door open throughout the period to perhaps intervene with the Poles rather than against Germany. On April 14, 1939, French, British, and Soviet negotiators begin talks on joining forces against Germany. On the 17th, the Soviets propose to the British and French a tripartite alliance against Germany.¹⁹⁹ On the same day, Soviet Ambassador Merekalov seeks out State Secretary von Weizsäcker in Berlin and tells him "that ideological differences of opinion need not disturb German-Russian relations, as was the case with Russian-Italian 198 Shirer, page 428 199 Maser, page 74 434 relations." He continues, "The Soviet Union has not used the present frictions between Germany and the Western democracies against Germany and does not wish to do so." ²⁰⁰ Thus, in April 1939, the Soviets stand in the doorway of the British and French and yet take care that the doorway of the Germans remains open to them. Between April 15 and June 23, the British and Soviet governments exchange seven notes each to set the framework for joining forces against Germany.²⁰¹ On July 8 and July 17, the governments in Paris and London submit a draft treaty to Moscow, but the Russians do not accept it until the British and French assure them that they will enter into military negotiations on waging war against Germany. At the time, there are no plans in Germany to wage war against France, Britain, or Russia. On July 24, a French-British-Soviet agreement on military cooperation is initialed but not signed. This does not definitively bind anyone, but it does pave the way for negotiations among the general staffs of the British, French, and Soviets. Even after this, the Russian leadership continues to pull its strings in two different directions. On August 4, Stalin approves a document prepared by the People's Commissariats for Defense and Foreign Affairs entitled "Ideas on Negotiations with England and France," which envisages five different possibilities for a deployment of

up to 120 army divisions against Germany.²⁰² The following day, Astakhov, chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in Berlin, seeks out Legationsrat Schnurre, the lecturer, at the Foreign Office and conveys to him from Foreign Minister Molotov in Moscow that the Soviet Union is interested in normalizing and improving relations with Germany.²⁰³ Both the British and French, as well as the Germans, now continue to seek the Soviet Union's help. On August 11, the military missions from London and Paris arrive in Moscow.²⁰⁴ Talks begin on the 13th. The British and French have brought no concrete ideas to Moscow as to how and with what forces they might wage their war against Germany. The Soviet negotiators under Marshal Voroshilov's leadership, on the contrary, are waiting with the five deployment options approved by Stalin against German 200 ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 215

201 Maser, page 53 202 Maser, page 22 203 Maser, page 75 and ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 772 204 The transcript of the Soviet-French-British military negotiations described below is taken from an article in the Russian newspaper International Life, issue 3/1959, pages 139-158 (Moscow). See also Benoist-Mechin, vol. 7, pages 239 ff 435 and on. Depending on the scenario, they offer to deploy 70 to 100% of the forces against Germany that the British and French had also planned.²⁰⁵ There is talk of a maximum of 2 million men and 102 Soviet divisions, of attacks against East Prussia and Silesia, of 5,500 aircraft, of bombers with ranges of up to 4,000 kilometers, and also of using the Soviet Northern Fleet and the Black Sea Fleet to cut off Germany from ore and oil imports. This is in army forces what the Wehrmacht is able to muster with reserve divisions and in air forces more than the German inventory of front-line aircraft. Thus, if Russia were also on Poland's side, Germany would be caught in a two-front war with an inferiority of forces in the ratio of 2.5 to 1. Marshal Voroshilov commented on this to the British and French military delegations, saying, "The operations of the Soviet troops against East Prussia and in Galicia, and the operations of England and France in the west, would mean the end of Germany." ²⁰⁶ If the Soviet Union were to support Poland militarily against Germany, Soviet forces would have to be allowed to march over Polish territory. Poland, remembering the old Curzon Line dispute with Russia, now fears that the passage of support troops might unexpectedly become a Russian occupation of "eastern Poland." Consequently, the Polish government refuses to agree to such an alliance. This is one reason for the failure of the Soviet-French-British talks. The other is the refusal of the British and French military delegations to pledge concretely their own arms assistance to the Soviets. The French want only to protect their own borders in the event of war and not to invade Germany, as the Russians do, and the head of the English delegation is not given written authority to negotiate. The impression is created among the Russians that the Soviet Union alone should bleed for the Poles, British and French in the event of war. Thus the Franco-English-Soviet negotiations drag on until August 21 and are then broken off without success. For Stalin, the second solution for the acquisition of "Eastern Poland" is now open: the pact with Hitler. Already on August 19, Stalin obtained the consent of the Politburo to enter into an alliance with the Germans instead of with France and England. He justified this reversal of course before the Soviet Union's highest decision-making body with a detailed analysis of the advantages and disadvantages that both courses of action had for the Russians. In doing so, Stalin assumes the very high probability of war between German 205 Maser, page 26 206 Maser, page 30 and Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Appendix II 436 and on the one hand and England-France on the other. A confrontation between Germany and the trio of England, France, and the Soviet Union would predictably end too quickly in German defeat. A war, however, in which the Germans would have to fight only the British and the French would last longer. Thus, it would be wiser to support Germany, which was considered to be weaker, instead of the British and the French. In this way, a war among the capitalist states could be drawn out longer and the forces of these states would be more worn

out than in the case of a quick victory of the British and French over Germany.²⁰⁷ With the prospect of a two-front war against a superior power, there would also be the risk that Hitler would refrain from a war for Danzig. Thus, on August 19, Stalin and the Politburo decide to change course and negotiate with Germany. On the same day, the decision is made to double the number of rifle divisions. Two facets of this futile Anglo-French-Soviet rapprochement effort become apparent when the whole process is turned on its head and carefully considered. First, it is noteworthy that England and France are here attempting to form an alliance with a dictatorship. Soviet Russia is itself a state with ambitions of world domination. It is pointedly anti-democratic and, as everyone in France and Britain knows, it ruthlessly tramples on the human rights of its citizens. State criminality, as exemplified by the "purges" among Russian elites in 1936 and 1937, is well known in the West in 1939. The same Winston Churchill who declared before the Aldwych Club in London in May 1919: "Of all the tyrannies of history, the Bolshevik is the worst, the most crushing, the most degrading. It is pure humbug ²⁰⁸ to pretend that it is not much worse than German militarism." ²⁰⁸ succinctly represents the alliance with this "Bolshevik tyranny" to the House of Commons on May 19, 1939, with British interests: "Without an effective Eastern Front there will be no adequate defense of our interests in the West, and without Russia there will be no Eastern Front." ²⁰⁹ Scruples about cooperating with an antidemocratic dictatorship whose state murder rate by then far exceeded Germany's were obviously foreign to Churchill in his antagonism to Germany. The political elites of England and France seek an alliance with an obviously criminal dictatorship, justifying it by standing up for democracy and human rights and thwarting Germany's ambitions for world domination. The attempt to enter into a pact with a dictatorship that would violate law and ²⁰⁷ Magenheimer, page 18. Some historians consider the two transcripts of these Stalin statements that have been found to be forgeries. Others cite evidence of their authenticity. Their content is at least consistent with the logic of the aforementioned Lenin speech of December 6, 1920 ²⁰⁸ Bernhardt, page 32 ²⁰⁹ Churchill Memoirs, page 454 437 freedom strangled at home for nearly two decades, reveals the claim to protect law, freedom, and democracy as a pretext for quite different purposes. England and France want to prevent the further strengthening of Germany in the summer of 1939. Here, both states are concerned with their own power and not with Poland or human rights. The other facet, which is completely overlooked in German historiography, is a bargain that the British and French are willing to make. During the Anglo-French-Soviet talks in July 1939, the Soviet side raises its demands for an alliance against Germany higher and higher. Among the "sacrifices" that the Russians demand of the British and French is the transfer of the three small Baltic states to the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. The British Foreign Minister Halifax accepts this only grudgingly, but the French government urges that an alliance with Russia should not fail because of this.²¹⁰ The alliance fails, as mentioned, because of Poland's objection and because of the British-French refusal to commit themselves concretely to their own weapons assistance. Thus, in July 1939, the French and British are quite willing to leave the Baltic states to the "care" of the Soviet Union in order to buy the Russians' arms assistance against Germany in return. Churchill justified the surrender of the three Baltic states to the Soviets in the already quoted speech in the House of Commons on May 19, 1939 with an alleged "community of interests" between Russians, Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians. He states: "What about the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, for whose sake Peter the Great went to war? Russia has the greatest interest in seeing that these countries do not fall into the hands of Nazi Germany." ²¹¹ Four weeks later, the German Reich government commits the same "crime" that the British and French failed to do in July 1939, thanks to the veto of the Poles: Germany leaves the Latvians and Estonians to the sphere of influence of Russia in the Molotov-Ribbentrop secret agreement. To make the "crime" more precise, it must be mentioned that neither the British nor the French nor the Germans concede to the Soviets to annex Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The three

countries concede to the Russians only the inclusion of the Baltic states in their zone of influence. The course of these futile Anglo-French efforts to conclude a pact with the Soviet Union in July 1939 disenchants the pre-war policies of the two democracies. They are not concerned with morals and ideals; they are concerned solely with power. 210 Rassinier, page 261 and Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pages 231 ff 211 Churchill Memoirs, pages 454 f 438 The German-Soviet Understanding Even before the scheduled signing of the completed treaty between London, Moscow, and Paris, Warsaw's objection to the two Western powers joining forces with the Soviets becomes apparent. Berlin took advantage of Warsaw's attitude and offered Moscow talks on August 4, 1939. On August 12, even before the military delegations of England, France and the Soviet Union had begun their negotiations in Moscow on a campaign against Germany, the Soviet chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Astakhov, reported for a second time to the head of the East German Foreign Office.

Foreign Office to Schnurre, the head of the East European department. On Molotov's behalf, he conveys that "on the Soviet side, one is interested in discussing the individual groups of questions that have been raised so far. Among the questions of interest, Astakhov mentions the "Polish problem." 212 The Russian also immediately suggests negotiating in Moscow. On August 15, the second day of the British-French-Russian negotiations, German-Soviet talks begin in Moscow. Ambassador Graf von der Schulenburg seeks out Foreign Minister Molotov and asks for an appointment for his Minister von Ribbentrop to visit Stalin. Molotov welcomes the German intention to seek an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. He then indicates to the Count what the Soviets have an interest in. These are four matters. First, Moscow hopes for a moderating influence of Berlin on Tokyo, since the Soviet Union and Japan are still at war. Second and third, Molotov wants a nonaggression pact and a trade and credit treaty with Germany. The fourth wish is obviously a deception. Molotov speaks of guaranteeing the Baltic states together. 213 Count von der Schulenburg reports the visit to Molotov to Berlin immediately. It is noteworthy that he follows up the report the next day with a short letter in which he expresses his doubts that the Soviets really want to guarantee the existence of the Baltic states together with the Germans. 214 That short letter of August 16 crosses with the next instruction from Berlin. In it, von Ribbentrop assures the Soviets of a non-aggression pact for 25 years and also holds out the prospect of influencing Japan, as requested. Again remarkably, von Ribbentrop states that the German Reich is prepared "to guarantee the Baltic States jointly with the Soviet Union." 215 The next day, August 17, the German ambassador reports to Molotov a second time and delivers the reactions from Berlin. The Soviet 212 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 50 213 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 79 214 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 88 215 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 75 439 Foreign Minister, for his part, delivers a written formulated reply to the questions that had been in the rooms since Schulenburg's first audience with him. In this reply note 216 the wishes for a trade and credit agreement and a non-aggression pact are mentioned once again. Furthermore, Molotov concedes in this letter that, as a result of Germany's anti-Soviet attitude, the Soviet Union had been forced to "take initial measures to prepare a defensive front against possible aggression on the Soviet Union on the part of Germany." This undoubtedly refers to the attacks against East Prussia and Silesia proposed to the British and French three days ago. The letter continues, "... that the Soviet Government has never had any aggressive intentions against Germany...." Instead of the hitherto consistently mentioned intention of guaranteeing the existence of the Baltic Republics jointly with the German Reich, Molotov now proposes a "special protocol" "forming an integrating part of the Pact." "Integrating part" means that this "special protocol" will be tied up into a package with the treaty which the German Reich government wants. Germany so the message gets both or nothing. Since Molotov's letter says nothing about the contents of this protocol, von der Schulenburg immediately asks the Russian Minister what the Soviet Government wants in this respect. Molotov gives no answer to this,

but as we know today, the "special protocol" has already become the "secret additional protocol" a week later, by which the German Reich government recognizes that eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Finland and the Baltic states belong to the sphere of interest of the Soviet Union. Thus, the Soviets have already hammered in their nails for the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 24, when they are still talking with the British and French about war with Germany in the same place. Ambassador von der Schulenburg cables Molotov's letter early in the morning of August 18 to Minister von Ribbentrop, who sends his reply the same day. The German foreign minister, unaware of Stalin's wishes and misunderstanding the meaning of the "special protocol," writes that the Reich government agrees with the "guarantee of the Baltic states."²¹⁷ On August 19, the British and French governments inform the Soviet that they will not sign the previously negotiated Franco-Soviet treaty because of the Polish government's objection. Thus nothing stands in the way of Russia's changing sides. At 4:00 p.m., the German ambassador is again summoned to the Foreign Office to see Molotov. He hands him 216 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 105 217 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 113 440 a draft text for the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. The text of the treaty does not yet include the additional protocol, but it ends with the sentence, "The present Pact is valid only upon the simultaneous signing of a special protocol on the points in which the contracting parts are interested in the field of foreign policy."²¹⁸ Count von der Schulenburg transmitted the text to Germany the same night. The "cat" with the Baltic countries is thus still not "out of the bag." Now follows move after move. Hitler, pressed for time in the Danzig crisis, looks to the non-aggression pact with Stalin, which he hopes will persuade the Poles, British, and French to give in on the Danzig corridor problem. He does not look to the Additional Protocol, which he still does not know what the Soviets will pack into it. Hitler telegraphed Stalin on August 20 to say that he accepted the draft nonaggression pact and that he wanted to send Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop with "the most comprehensive general power of attorney" to sign the treaty and to "draft and sign the protocol."²¹⁹ On August 21, Stalin thanked Hitler for the telegram and invited von Ribbentrop to Moscow on August 23.²²⁰ When Hitler informs the army and army group commanders of the Wehrmacht, which has marched up in the meantime, that he has now decided to wage war against Poland, he does not yet know that 24 hours later Stalin will have von Ribbentrop sign over large parts of Eastern Europe as Soviet areas of interest in the Secret Additional Protocol. Hitler still believes that von Ribbentrop should sign the guarantee for the three Baltic states in Moscow. He can guess that Stalin will demand a price for the non-aggression pact, but he does not know that Russia will take two thirds of Poland itself four weeks later. The next day, August 23, Ribbentrop arrives in Moscow. At 6 p.m. Stalin and Molotov receive von Ribbentrop and Count von der Schulenburg in the Kremlin. After a brief and polite greeting, they quickly get down to business. The non-aggression pact, which is soon agreed upon, corresponds almost entirely to the Russian draft, except for the point that it is to be valid for ten years instead of five, as proposed by the Soviets. Then it is a question of the Secret Additional Protocol desired by Stalin. Von Ribbentrop, to whom Hitler had given unrestricted negotiating authority, is not quite sure of his case in view of Stalin's demands. At about 10 p.m., he asks that the talks be interrupted for a short time and obtains Hitler's agreement by telephone.²²¹ 218 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 133 219 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 142 220 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 159 221 Maser, Page 41 441 Hitler, faced with the choice of preserving his freedom of action on the Danzig question vis-à-vis Poland, Britain, and France with Stalin backing him, or relinquishing Danzig, the extraterritorial transit routes, and the protection of the German minority in Poland without Stalin, accepts the sphere-of-interest boundaries the Russian demands. Hitler, who had not known Stalin's demands before, apparently decides without much hesitation. Shortly after midnight, on August 24, the Non-Aggression Pact²²² and the Secret Additional Protocol are signed by Molotov and Ribbentrop. The decisive two paragraphs of the

Additional Protocol read: "1. in the event of a territorial-political reorganization in the territories belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania shall at the same time form the border of the spheres of interest of Germany and the USSR. Lithuania's interest in the Vilnius region is recognized by both sides. In the event of a territorial-political reorganization of the territories belonging to the Polish State, the spheres of interest of Germany and the USSR shall be delimited approximately by the line of the Narew, Vistula and San Rivers. The question whether the mutual interests make the preservation of an independent Polish state desirable, and how this state should be delimited, can be finally settled only in the course of further political developments."

223 The German-Soviet agreement, so soon after the failure of the preceding French-English-Soviet negotiations, is a sensation for the whole of Europe, a shock for Great Britain and France, and yet no occasion for Poland to approach Germany on the Danzig question. The surprise is so great because relations between Moscow and Berlin since World War I have not been relations between Moscow and Berlin have not been free of strains and antagonisms. The relationship between the two states has been quite changeable, and not always to Poland's disadvantage. Germany pursued a clearly anti-communist domestic and foreign policy, especially after 1933. In this way, the German-Polish relationship, burdened by border issues, was contrasted with a German-Soviet relationship, burdened by ideological issues. But when Poland annexed West Teschen against the warning of Soviet Russia, and when it refused to clear the way for the reincorporation of Danzig against the urgent wish of the Germans, it violated the interests of both neighbors. Poland gambles away its hitherto normal neighborly relations because of two small pieces of land, neither of which is even Polish. It risks that the Soviet Union and Germany, both of which have claims to Russian and German populated land in Poland, respectively, will come to an agreement at Poland's expense. And so it happens.

222 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 228 223 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 229 442 Fig. 12: After the signing From left: Foreign Minister v. Ribbentrop, Legation Councilor Hencke, Yossif Stalin, Legation Councilor Hilger, and Foreign Minister Molotov The German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact assures both Germany and Russia that the other power will not take sides to protect Poland in the event of war. Thus, the German-Soviet antagonism is also no longer a protection for the Poles in the center. The Secret Additional Protocol speaks only of spheres of interest. It does not say that the Soviet Union may now seize Finland and the Baltic States. As harshly as this German-Soviet secret agreement is criticized later, it corresponds to the customs of that time. At that time, it was quite common among all major states to stake out spheres of interest with each other without asking the countries in these spheres for their opinion. Thus, as already mentioned, Great Britain and Italy concluded such an agreement in April 1938:224 England gave Italy a "free hand" in Abyssinia and vis-à-vis Spain and, in return, was guaranteed freedom of action in Central Europe. In the British-French-Soviet negotiations in July 1939, described above, the parties also attempted to define their spheres. Both 224 British-Italian Agreement of April 16, 1938, see Churchill Memoirs, page 115 443 England and Germany, as well as France, Italy and the Soviet Union, are clear about what the spheres of interest really mean. They are the authorization to rule and reign in the spheres to the detriment of the small states. The Secret Additional Protocol with the sphere-of-interest border across Poland is leaked to U.S. President Roosevelt the next day by the German diplomat Herwarth von Bittenfeld from Moscow. Roosevelt quickly fails to inform the Poles of this.225 The Vatican's Attempt at Mediation In the period of multiple negotiations and coalition talks, in which most European states are first and foremost trying to position themselves well for a coming war and in which they are all playing with fire, the Holy See remains the only authority without territorial or hegemonic interests of its own. Pope Pius XII sees that another war in Europe will have few winners, but many losers among the Christian Western

nations. Poland and Germany clash over territories with German populations under Polish sovereignty. England has taken Poland's side in this dispute. Italy makes demands on France for Djibouti, Corsica, and Nice. England and Italy have differences over the Suez Canal. France still does not want to let Germany out of the shackles of Versailles and opposes Germany on the Danzig question. England does not concede to any continental power a supremacy on the mainland. With so many powder kegs and so many fuses laid out, any spark anywhere in all of Europe can set the continent on fire in a short time. In this highly explosive situation, Pope Pius XII makes an attempt to defuse the disputes of the five great states in a five-power peace conference, if it is possible to settle them and thus preserve peace in Europe. The Holy Father, a Church leader with long diplomatic experience of his own, knows that such conferences must be prepared by soundings out the parties involved if they are to promise success. Thus he is sending Church diplomats to the capitals of the five countries concerned. The first such visit was made to Mussolini on May 1, 1939. After a one-day period of consideration, the Italian "Duce" agrees to the Pope's plan without restriction or conditions.²²⁶ On May 5, the Berlin nuncio Monsignor Orsenigo seeks out Adolf Hitler in Berchtesgaden. The minutes of the 225 Herwarth, page 188 226 Rassinier, page 246 444 meeting reveal that the "Führer" "does not believe in a danger of war, since the tense mood is due more to agitation than to fact." ²²⁷ Hitler, however, reserves consultation with Mussolini before agreeing to the conference. Both the "Führer" and the "Duce" had promised each other such consultations. Hitler asks Orsenigo to "convey his real thanks to the Holy See" and immediately instructs Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to consult with Mussolini. Thus, by May 5, both dictators have agreed in one case and not cancelled in the other. On May 5, France's Foreign Minister Bonnet is also informed of Pius XII's peace plan. Shortly thereafter, President Daladier personally informed the papal nuncio in Paris that France "would not participate in any conference that would take place under the threat of German cannons." ²²⁸ When the nuncio followed up, Daladier countered with the remark that such a conference would "make it clear to everyone that the pope would only be called upon to pull the Italian chestnuts out of the fire and prepare a new Munich. Shortly thereafter, the Secretary General²²⁹ of the Quai d'Orsay Leger justified the French rejection of the peace conference to the U.S. Ambassador Bullitt in Paris quite differently: if such a conference were to take place, "one would expect both France and Poland to make concessions to the Pope as arbitrator and Great Britain as supreme arbitrator over them to Germany and Italy"... as far as Poland was concerned, one was convinced at the Quai d'Orsay that Warsaw "would not accept the arbitration of a foreign power in the matter of German demands." Otherwise, France feared that England would "arbitrate away" the interests of the French and Poles in the conference in order to keep the negotiations away from the otherwise inevitable subject of British colonies.²³⁰ So, France did not want a peace in 1939 that might cost her own concessions. On May 5, the Pope's plan is also presented to Lord Halifax, the British Foreign Secretary. He conveys his reply the same day with a telegram to the British Ambassador to the Vatican, saying, "May His Holiness offer his good offices separately and successively to ²³¹ Poland and Germany, France and Italy." ²³¹ England declined at the time to participate in negotiations over the dispute over Danzig or the Italian-French disputes. According to ²²⁷ ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 331 ²²⁸ Tansill, page 564 ²²⁹ Secretary of State of the French Foreign Ministry ²³⁰ Tansill, pages 564 f ²³¹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume V, page 435 445 the bitter experience with the Munich Peace Conference, which ultimately failed to save the independence of Czechia because Hitler did not keep his word, there is no further need for such conferences in London. The Polish Foreign Minister, commenting on the Pope's proposal for a conference, said that Poland did not wish to take part in any conference dealing with Polish concessions to Germany. Poland does not wish to participate in a "second Munich Conference." ²³² Mussolini, who had initially agreed to Pius XII's conference plan, and Hitler, who had not initially rejected it, respond

to the Pope's offer with an agreed note on May 12 after the French, British, and Poles rejected it. Both state that "the atmospheric situation at present does not yet seem so favorable as to be conducive to an international discussion on a larger scale," 233 and ask to refrain from papal mediation. Pope Pius XII's attempt is one of Europe's last chances to escape war as it then comes. But Hitler had already destroyed the basis for such a peace conference, a minimum of mutual trust, before Pius XII came on the scene with his proposal. With the failure of this papal initiative of May 1939, it becomes apparent that since the annexation of the Czech Republic as a German protectorate, England and France are no longer primarily interested in maintaining peace in Europe, but first and foremost in containing Germany, even if that should mean war. From now on, from the British point of view, what matters is not the incorporation of Danzig into Poland or Germany, but solely Germany's behavior toward Poland. Poland's further behavior toward Germany is no longer of concern to Britain. Two further peace initiatives by the pope immediately before the outbreak of war also remain unsuccessful.²³⁴ The subsequent course of

However, the later course of events shows that Europe would probably not have been spared another war over the balance of power on the continent, even without Danzig. Western Europe probably would not have accepted Stalin's invasion of Finland in November 1939 without intervening. At the latest, however, with the planned attack of the Soviet Union against the German Reich, the states of Western Europe would have had to save their forms of state and life from Bolshevism and take sides. Despite his advanced preparations for an attack against Germany in the fall of 1941, Stalin only half failed to make his move ²³² Tansill, page 565 ²³³ ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 372 ²³⁴ on August 24, 1939 and August 31, 1939 ⁴⁴⁶ because Hitler launched his campaign against the Soviet Union a few weeks earlier. For the people in Poland, in Germany, and in the Free State of Danzig, the year 1939 leading up to the beginning of the war is more than a period of fierce diplomatic action. For many, it is above all a time of high seething emotions. The partly open, partly secret negotiations about border corrections and coalitions for the war, which one can literally hear coming, are in any case hardly comprehensible to the citizens of Europe. In Danzig, the desire to join the motherland is growing. In Germany, people believe that the right is on their side when Hitler demands the annexation of Danzig and safe transport routes to cut-off East Prussia. And in Poland anger and hatred against the disloyal fellow citizens of German, White Russian and Ukrainian language are increasing. Since England's guarantees and France's military promises, a sense of certainty of victory has been growing in Poland, somewhere between dream and intoxication. In Germany, the population wants Danzig, but not war. And in Danzig, neither Germans nor Poles find the moderation that would have been in place in 1939. With the British guarantee in March for Poland and the denunciation of the German-Polish Treaty in April, the tensions between Berlin and Warsaw increase, which is immediately felt by the German minority in Poland. From May 1939 on, the outrages of Poles against Germans again take on terrible forms. In the countryside, German farms are set on fire in large numbers by Poles, the farmers are driven away, people in the cities are beaten up, in individual cases beaten to death. German church services are stormed and broken up so frequently that the Vatican feels compelled to complain about this to the Polish government. In the summer of 1939, the German government had to set up reception camps to cope with the flow of German refugees from Poland.²³⁵ From June 1939, mutual accusations and suspicions increased in the Free State of Danzig between the German Danzig population and the Polish Danzig authorities.²³⁶ Polish military transports passed through the Danzig area without being reported to the German Danzig Senate beforehand, as had been agreed. The Polish military crew at the ammunition depot ²³⁵ By mid-August, the number of those who fled was 78,000 in the territory of the German Reich and another 18,000 who escaped to Danzig. See Rasmus, pages 28 ff ²³⁶ The following account is taken from the book by the League of Nations Representative for Danzig, Prof. Burckhardt,

"Meine Danziger Mission," pages 321–345, and from the files in the ADAP. 447 on the Westerplatte next to Danzig's harbor is reinforced to 240 soldiers, although the League of Nations has authorized only 88. The Polish customs officers, originally six officials, have since become 110.²³⁷ When German–Danzig authorities complain about the military transports and reinforcements to the Polish Commissar General at the Danzig Senate, Mr. Chodacki, he dismisses the complaints.

Map 34: Gdansk and the Westerplatte (as Map 29) Particularly critical in the summer of 1939 is a dispute that has become known as the "customs inspector dispute. Beginning in May, controls and behavior of Polish customs officials toward the Gdansk people in the small border traffic, which is of particular importance to the people there in their insular situation, become more severe. Furthermore, the Polish customs officers arrogated to themselves powers of command over their German colleagues that they did not have.²³⁸ And to the annoyance of the German side, the number of Polish officers was substantially increased. The German police claim that some of the additional customs officers belong to the Polish intelligence service and are being transferred in this way to Danzig ²³⁷ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VI, Document 6 ²³⁸ Under the Treaty of Warsaw, Polish customs officers are neither superior nor subordinate to German ones. ⁴⁴⁸ infiltrated. As a result, the German officials no longer cooperate properly with the Polish ones. They in turn delayed the export of Gdansk agricultural and fishery products, which spoiled particularly easily in the hot summer of '39. In this tense situation, the President of the Gdansk Senate writes to the Polish Commissioner General, complaining about the incidents described and announcing that German customs officials will no longer take instructions from the Polish ones in the future. In response, Commissioner General Chodacki sends President Greiser an ultimatum by return of post to withdraw this instruction by 6:00 p.m. of the same day²³⁹, otherwise "the Polish government will immediately retaliate against the free city." In addition, Chodacki announces that the Polish customs will be armed with immediate effect.²⁴⁰ The dispute is also fueled by the fact that a subordinate official from the Senate Administration writes to Chodacki on his own authority and without any order: "... the Gdansk authorities would violently oppose any attempt by the Polish customs inspectors to perform their duties.... Hitler, asked for advice by the president of the Senate, urged him to ease tensions and "not to poison the matter even more. President Greiser succeeded in persuading Commissioner General Chodacki to rescind the ultimatum. As trivial as this incident may seem, it shows how close the world is to the brink of war. State Secretary in the Foreign Office von Weizsäcker sends the Polish chargé d'affaires in Berlin the Reich government's disapproval of the customs inspector dispute, the ultimatum, and the threat to the Gdansk population. The latter consulted his ministry in Warsaw and officially informed von Weizsäcker the next day that Poland would regard any interference by the Reich government in Polish–Danzig relations to the detriment of Poland as an "act of aggression. "²⁴³ The Polish Foreign Office thus indicated that any partisan action on the part of the Reich government in favor of Danzig and to the detriment of Poland would mean war. Given the insignificant customs dispute in Danzig, this is quite a massive threat, especially since England and France had pledged to support Poland in any war initiated by Germany. Hitler expresses outrage at the Polish ultimatum at this already tense time, and he speaks of "the limit of his forbearance ²³⁹ Chodacki Ultimatum of August 5, 1939, 01 a.m., see ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 774 ²⁴⁰ According to the Treaty of Warsaw, Polish customs officers may carry arms only if German customs officers also carry arms. ²⁴¹ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 211 ²⁴² ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 771 ²⁴³ v. Weizsäcker Memoirs, pages 244 f 449 is reached." Poland's press now added fuel to the fire by writing that Hitler had "given in" in the tariff dispute and that a single note, a little brusque, had been enough to "bring him to his knees. "²⁴⁴ British Ambassador Henderson, in a letter to Foreign Secretary Halifax in London on August 8, commented on the Danzig incident thus: "The elements tending to humiliate Germany are encouraged by press articles in England and

Poland, . . . it may be that humiliation is salutary for Hitler, but if this dangerous policy is not that of His Majesty's Government, I earnestly suggest that the utmost should be done both in Warsaw and in London to prevent Hitler from being driven in the next few weeks into a position where the dictator's pride will not permit him 245 to tread slowly even if he wanted to." 245 This is three weeks before the war. The Chodacki ultimatum and Hitler's reaction to it so close to the start of the war allow conclusions to be drawn about his intentions with regard to Poland. If the "Führer" had really wanted war with Poland instead of just Danzig and the transit routes, he could easily have had it now. All he had to do was to tell the Danzig Senate not to give way in the customs inspectors' dispute. Poland would then have taken action against the Free State, as threatened. In response, Danzig could have declared its annexation to the German Reich, and Poland would certainly have taken military action against Danzig. Thus the Poles and not the Germans would have triggered the war that was in the air. If Hitler had wanted war with Poland at all costs at the beginning of August 1939, he would hardly have let this opportunity pass him by. He probably would not have advised Senate President Greiser "not to poison the matter even more." In addition to the real turmoil come the fictional ones. On July 5, 1939, a rumor circulated that the "Führer" would enter Danzig today, and that annexation to the Reich was only a matter of a few hours. There is no truth in any of this, but it shows the now tense situation in the separated city.²⁴⁶ Also in July, the false news spreads that the Poles were planning to use the railroad lines within the Free State for military purposes.

within the Free State militarily. The Polish government denies it, and nothing of the sort happens. In July and August, the situation in Poland and on the Polish-German borders came to such a head that Danzig became almost a minor matter.²⁴⁷ In July, anti-German demonstrations in Poland's cities reached a new high. Forced business and plant closures of firms with distinct 244 Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 213 245 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VI, Document 585 246 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 209 247 AA 1939 No. 2, Documents 393 to 444. The following events can also be read in the STADER TAGEBLATT July and August 1939. 450 schen owners are the order of the day. In the Teschen region, which had just been acquired by Poland, German-speaking and Czech teachers, pastors and civil servants were dismissed from their jobs without pensions because they were "disloyal and hostile to the state. In Upper Silesia, it is the German-speaking workers and executives who are dismissed en masse from industry, along with forestry officials and forestry workers. Other German schools are forced to close on the orders of Polish authorities. From the beginning of July to mid-August 1939, the German consuls in Poland report many hundreds of attacks on "ethnic Germans". The spectrum ranges from beating to castration. Similar reports come from Galicia: Mass arrests of Ukrainians, the destruction of a large number of Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches, and in Lviv the banning of the Ukrainian-language newspaper DILO. On the German side, the Polish outrages against members of the German minority are meanwhile repaid by state reprisals against Poles in the territory of the Reich. The expulsions of Germans there are followed by expulsions of Poles here. All this, in turn, only fuels anti-German sentiment in Poland. Meanwhile, Gdansk is rumbling, albeit in a different way. The German population of the city demanded annexation to the motherland at large events with the slogan "home to the Reich". In August, the SS-Heimwehr made its first public appearance with a parade in the streets of Danzig. And Gauleiter Forster provokes London and Paris in a completely unnecessary way. At a mass meeting he accuses the British and French of interfering in Gdansk affairs without justification and of taking the side of the Poles: "It is none of their business how we want to shape our future. We Danzigers also do not care how the English and French try to shape their destiny." ²⁴⁸ Abroad, too, the war is being talked up and the mood is being stirred up, which, however, is not surprising after the occupation of the Czech Republic, after Italy's attack on Albania, and in view of the escalation in Poland. In April 1939, England's Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax,

informed U.S. President Roosevelt that the British fleet could become the target of a German "lightning attack" at any moment.²⁴⁹ On April 9, U.S. Ambassador Bullitt reported from Paris to the State Department²⁵⁰ in Washington: "I spoke briefly tonight with Bonnet (the French Foreign Minister). He asked me to inform my government that it was five ²⁵¹ minutes to twelve. At any moment war might break out." ²⁵¹ ²⁴⁸ ²⁴⁹ STADER TAGEBLATT, August 14, 1939 ²⁴⁹ Note of April 5, 1939, see Tansill, page 554 ²⁵⁰ U.S. State Department ²⁵¹ Tansill, page 558 ⁴⁵¹ Two days later Bullitt reports a conversation with French Prime Minister Daladier to Washington. He writes that Daladier believed that Hitler and Mussolini "would probably move to war in a week or two." ²⁵² At the time, the Reich government was still trying to reach its goal in the Danzig and Corridor questions by negotiation. August also brought no improvement in the situation. The German Reich stuck to its known demands vis-à-vis Poland. The Poles rejected any agreement to their detriment on the Danzig and transit route issues. The English and French try to draw the Russians into war against Germany, before Germany in turn obliges the

Russians to remain neutral for the coming conflict. Meanwhile, the background music from Danzig and from Poland grows shriller. On August 16, England's Ambassador Henderson tries once again from Berlin to counsel reason and moderation. He sends a telegram to Foreign Minister Halifax, writing: "I would personally recommend that the Polish Government be advised, and advised at once, to instruct its Ambassador here to take some diplomatic step, which should be easy for him through Goering. Lipski, in spite of all that has happened, is still persona grata here. ²⁵³ The Poles might suggest returning to the pre-March state of negotiations.... to make it possible to re-enter talks." ²⁵⁴ Two telegrams the following day from Halifax to Kennard, the British ambassador in Warsaw show no response to Henderson's recommendation. In the last week before the outbreak of war, Polish anti-aircraft batteries make a few more attempts to shoot down Deutsche Lufthansa passenger planes on their flight from Berlin to Königsberg over the Baltic Sea. There are numerous shootouts at the border crossings between Polish and German customs officers and soldiers, with many casualties. The "torching" of German farms in the Polish borderlands continues unabated. In August, Polish raids and arsons also spread to the German side of the border. Completely superfluously, the "Security Service of the Reichsführer SS" (SD) stages fictitious arson and explosive attacks on both sides of the border in the last days before the start of the war in order to exploit them for propaganda.²⁵⁵ These illegal activities of the SD would have been a waste of time in view of the large number of Polish assaults that occurred anyway ²⁵² Tansill, page 558 ²⁵³ Desirable Person ²⁵⁴ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 35 ²⁵⁵ Rasmus, pages 92f and 357 ⁴⁵² not have been necessary to turn foreign countries against Poland or to create another occasion for the German invasion of Poland. The population on the German side sees the stream of refugees, the shootings, and the attacks on the German peasants across the border with increasing horror. They expect that the hustle and bustle will soon be put to an end. On August 31, the day before the war began, the Poles murdered the German consul in Krakow. The German-Polish border is in flames in August 1939, even without war. Public opinion in the German Reich on Danzig, the war and Poland Public opinion in Germany on the neighboring nation in the East, on the territories lost after the World War and on a possible dispute over Danzig, West Prussia and Upper Silesia is, of course, quite different before the Second World War than it is after the catastrophe of the war lost in 1945. Before 1939, approval or disapproval of German foreign policy toward Poland is essentially shaped by the views that the majority of the population in general has at the time about the policies of the dictator Hitler. The journalist Sebastian Haffner, who emigrated to England in 1938, aptly describes these views in his postwar book "Anmerkungen zu Hitler" ("Notes on Hitler") as follows:²⁵⁶ "Hitler's 'positive achievements' have put Germany's population at the time, regardless of their affiliation with the working class or the bourgeoisie and regardless of their earlier ties to the KPD,

SPD, Zentrum or whoever else, into a 'Hitler devotion and faith in the Führer' that leaves virtually no room for healthy criticism. The list of Hitler's achievements is now long and respectable. He is credited with an economic miracle without inflation in the midst of a prolonged worldwide depression. Out of crying need and mass misery," according to Sebastian Haffner, "a generally modest and comfortable prosperity had emerged. The Versailles penal provisions were largely suspended. The Saarland and the Memelland belonged to the Reich again, as did the Austrians, who had demanded annexation in two referendums, and the Sudeten Germans. Miraculously, there was no war because of this. Thus, as far as Hitler's reign until the beginning of the war is concerned, the German population is spoiled for success and full of confidence. The negative side of the balance with the persecution of political dissidents and with the crimes against minorities 256 Haffner, pages 37 ff 453 of foreign descent does not appear so clearly and is not judged to be so severe as to diminish the successes and confidence." Thus far Haffner's "Notes on Hitler." With this description, Haffner, an émigré, describes how interested citizens in 1939 felt, saw and evaluated the situation in their own country and the position of the German Reich in the world. This helps to answer the question of why the German people accepted the foreign policy leading to the opening of the war as they did in the late summer of 1939. Haffner resists the temptation to insert his postwar knowledge of the course and end of this war into his consideration of the people of 1939. He describes alone what people in Germany were thinking at the time. In the positive mood of that time, the German people followed their first politician on the road to the great catastrophe that we now call the Second World War. For the ordinary German citizen of 1939, the start of a new war at that time is at first

only a last, outstanding step to end the unjustified sanctions and the breaches of international law of Versailles. This last step is to serve the liberation of the German compatriots who have been forced to live under Polish rule for 20 years. That this step towards the final overcoming of Versailles is also the first step in a completely different direction, leading first to a new world war and then to another defeat in 1945, cannot be known at that time. The fact that, despite this, quite a few people were already harboring anxious forebodings in 1939 does not mean that they knew with any clarity what would still develop out of the dispute with Poland. Until 1939, public opinion was influenced by quite different factors than it was from the beginning of the war. First of all, there are Hitler's speeches, in which the "Führer" repeatedly and suggestively emphasizes his will for peace. He says so often that people believe him, that he knows the sufferings of war from his own bitter experience, and that he wants to serve peace in Europe. Secondly, despite all the poker-facedness that can be seen in Hitler even at that time, it speaks for his foreign policy that he always got along without war and bloodshed, from the annexation of the Saar region to the occupation of the Rhineland, to the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, even during the illegal occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Thirdly, in solving the then pending Danzig question, the population certainly registers that Hitler, as the first postwar chancellor, has renounced the return of West Prussia-Pomerania and the correction of the borders within Upper Silesia, and that Posen has long since ceased to be an issue for him. In accordance with the right of self-determination of peoples recognized since 1918, the German Reich could just as well have asserted its interests in those parts of West Prussia and Upper Silesia that had been predominantly German and inhabited until 1919. The self-restraint on Danzig which Adolf Hitler apparently imposes on himself vis-à-vis the Polish government, and the certainty 454 that Danzig is German and not in the least Polish, makes people all over Germany believe that Hitler is waging the quarrel with Poland over a thoroughly just cause. The fourth factor that captures public opinion in 1939 for Hitler's attitude toward Poland is the level of information people have about the Danzig situation and the traffic problems on the transit routes into detached East Prussia. Everyone in Germany knows that Danzig has become a semi-autonomous area under the supervision of the League of Nations and not a part of the state of

Poland. Everyone knows that the people of Gdansk have demanded referendums several times in recent years, and that they want to be annexed to their "own" country. Everyone knows that Poland itself is laying claim to the semi-autonomous Free State and has announced war in the event of Gdansk's annexation to the Reich. Everyone knows the reports of the conditions on the transit routes through the corridor, of sealed trains, customs harassment, rifle shots at passenger trains, and of attempts by Polish anti-aircraft batteries to shoot down Lufthansa planes. The fifth thing that seems worse than Danzig is the oppression of the German minority in Poland. The fate of the Germans who remained in the separated territories and did not migrate is similar to that of the Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia in the 1990s of the 20th century. Just as the Free World in 1999 believes that it can no longer stand idly by and watch the tribulations and persecution of the Kosovars and therefore starts a war against Serbia, the majority of the German population in 1939 believes that it cannot continue to tolerate the suffering of its compatriots in Poland. So they follow Hitler into the war with trepidation, but also with faith in the "just cause." A sixth reason that leads to the solidarity of the population with Hitler at the beginning of the war is the image that people have of foreign countries. The so-called Peace of Versailles stands in stark contrast to the moderate peace agreements made by the Germans in the past hundred years. The terms of the peace accords were negotiated with France in 1815, with Austria in 1866, and again with France in 1872, and were not dictated. None of the defeated countries has ever been disarmed and plundered. None of them has subsequently been dictated the sole guilt for the outbreak of war like a sentence. None of the defeated nations was deprived of its collective honor after the defeat. After the First

World War, Germans still know the details of the history of this war. They evaluate Versailles as what it is without any doubt according to their knowledge: an act of revenge of France, of enrichment of England, of naivety of America and a Judas reward for the formerly allied Italy, altogether a relapse into the time of barbarism. Britain and France, after this history, are not powers still to be trusted by the Germans of 1939. If Hitler often unwisely throws England and France under the bus before the war, he does not have to reckon with the criticism of broad sections of the population in his own country. It is mostly only diplomats, politicians and high officers who see where all this can lead. A seventh factor is certainly the experience of the years since the war. Neither the victors nor the League of Nations have of their own accord held out a hand of reconciliation to the defeated Germans. Instead, many victorious states have not honored their Versailles disarmament commitments. France, moreover, during the period when Germany was virtually defenseless militarily, laid a network of military treaties with Germany's neighboring states around the Reich. In the period before Hitler, England, France, and America did not grant a single territorial concession to the democratically legitimized Reich governments that could have made the postwar order of Versailles bearable for the Germans.²⁵⁷ Against this background, Hitler's brute force methods first became attractive. Thus, it is not surprising that in 1939 Germany, and in the case of Danzig in particular, considered self-help a legitimate and proven form of dealing among states. What seems so brute from today's point of view is for the people in the 1930s only the consistent enforcement of the right of self-determination, which was due to the Germans as it was to all other peoples. Incidentally, this view of the Germans was not completely incomprehensible to clever Britons at the time. Thus, England's ambassador in Berlin, Sir Henderson, wrote with obvious regret soon after the war began: "Postwar experience had unfortunately taught Nazi Germany that nothing could be ²⁵⁸ achieved without force or the threat of force." ²⁵⁸ Almost no one in the German Reich wants another war in 1939. The horrors of the past are far from forgotten. But almost everyone wants the unsolved problems with the Poles to be settled soon. The majority of Germans hoped first for the German-Polish negotiations and then for Hitler's method of threatening with the military. When success fails and Hitler gives the order to attack Poland, the majority of all

citizens accept this new war, which they had hoped would be spared until the very end. Poland's Self-Evaluation on the Eve of War With the British-French declarations of guarantee behind it and trusting in the promised major attack by the French against Germany in the event of war, the Polish leadership in the spring and summer of 1939 lulled itself into a deceptive sense of security. From the Polish point of view, Germany is trapped between about 120 French and further English divisions 257 Even the early withdrawal of the occupation troops in 1930 had to be bought with the German assurance to pay reparations until 1988. 258 Henderson, page 197 456 in the west, the strong British navy on the seas, and 45 Polish divisions in the east. Foreign Minister Beck, and with him apparently the majority of the government, lulled themselves into the illusion that the Polish forces were superior to the Wehrmacht, and that they would defeat the Wehrmacht in concert with the British and French. Immediately after the British and French promises of guarantees and aid, Ambassador von Moltke reported Polish views on this subject from Warsaw to Berlin: "In this self-assurance and overestimation of one's own military strength, as expressed in the press, lies a danger with regard to the Polish national character. That this is not merely press propaganda is shown by a vouched-for statement made by Deputy War Minister Gluchowski in a serious conversation, in which he stated that the German Wehrmacht was a big bluff because Germany lacked the trained reserves to replenish its formations. Asked if he thought Poland was seriously out-259 laying Germany, Gluchowski replied: 'But of course' Gmchowski is not alone in this assessment of Poland's strength. On May 15, 1939, during the Polish-French military negotiations in Paris, members of the French delegation asked the Polish Minister of War, General Kasprzycki, whether the Polish border fortifications would withstand a German attack. He answers with confidence, "We have no fortifications, for we intend to wage a war of movement and invade Germany as soon as operations begin." 259 260 Two weeks before the start of the war, French Foreign Minister Bonnet warns the

Polish ambassador Count Lukasiewicz about the strength of the German Wehrmacht. Lukasiewicz also dismisses Bonnet's fears, saying, "On the contrary, the Polish army will invade Germany from the very first day." 261 Rumors of the Wehrmacht leadership's hostile attitude toward Hitler's attack plans apparently spread in Polish government circles. This, too, feeds the certainty of victory in Poland. Eighteen hours before the start of the war, a Swedish mediator named Dahlems and a diplomat from the British Embassy in Berlin attempt to deliver another of Hitler's negotiating offers to Polish Ambassador Lipski at what might be called the last hour. Lipski makes it clear that he does not want to take note of it and tells the British: 259 Ambassador's Report of March 28, 1939, from Warsaw, see ADAP, Series D, Volume VI, Document 115 and AA 1939 Volume 2, Document 210 260 Bonnet, page 224 261 Bonnet, page 252 457 "that he has no reason whatever to be interested in notes or offers from the German side. He knew the situation in Germany well after his five and a half years as Ambassador..He was convinced that in the event of war riots would break out in that country and Polish troops would march successfully against Berlin." 262 Even after August 23, when the German-Soviet treaty so fateful for Poland was concluded, Poland's Foreign Minister Beck still did not correctly assess his country's situation. He assesses the pact as an act of desperation on the part of the Germans, who, in his opinion, are in a bad position vis-à-vis the Allied Poles, British, and French. 263 Beck is influenced by the Polish army's exaggerated self-promotion, bound by the population's agitated wartime mood, and so set in his ways by the anti-German attitude of the media in Poland that he is now left with no room for maneuver on the Danzig question through Polish fault. The few moderating voices that still exist in Poland go unheeded. On August 23, Count Lubi-enski, the head of the Polish foreign minister's cabinet, arrived in Berlin from Warsaw and tried to defuse the impending crisis by describing his minister as willing to make peace and negotiate, but unable to act at the moment. Lubienski wants to buy time for Beck. His argument: "Colonel Beck is well aware of the situation. He by no means

underestimates the strength of the German army, although Marshal Rydz-Smigly constantly claims that he will smash it to pieces in a new battle at Grunwald²⁶⁴. He also knows the weakness of the French and British armies. For the rest, the détente that has occurred between Germany and the Soviet Union causes him great concern. But you must also realize that the national mood in Poland is inflamed to white heat and that no statesman today can find the magic word to calm the unleashed spirits again..."

²⁶⁵ Lubienski's mission regrettably remains without effect. Beck does not draw any consequences. He misses the chance to exchange the status of the city of Danzig in favor of the guarantee of Poland's postwar borders offered in return. The latter, after all, has been the goal of Polish foreign policy for over 20 years. Thus, on the day before the war began, the majority of officers, diplomats, politicians, and media personnel in Poland believed that Polish troops would enter Berlin rather than that the Wehrmacht would soon conquer the capital city of Warsaw. ²⁶² Dahlems, page 110 and IMT Protocols, Volume IX, page 521 ²⁶³ Rassinier, page 268 ²⁶⁴ Historical Battle of Tannenberg 1410 ²⁶⁵ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, pages 433 f 458 The Last Proposals for Mediation August 1939 becomes a hot month in every respect. The British, the Poles, the Russians, the French, the Italians, the Germans, the Americans, the Belgians, the Swedes, and the Holy See stoke fires or haul buckets of water, depending on their interests; some for peace, others for their own people's right to self-determination or for their own vested interests, and ultimately most for war. The King of the Belgians, on behalf of the heads of many small states, appeals to Germans and to Poles to come to an amicable agreement and to preserve peace for Europe. The Holy Father's efforts of May to call the quarreling powers to a peace conference have already been described. The Italians immediately agree. The British, the French, and the Poles wave it off, and Germany replies that then there is probably no point. A series of other conference attempts follows in August. On August 8, the Swedish mediator Dahlems proposes a secret German-British-French-Italian discussion on a peaceful settlement of the disputes.²⁶⁶ The German Reich, represented by Minister Goering, immediately agrees. England let it be known that an English answer could be expected only after some time had elapsed. At the time, the British and French were negotiating with the Soviets in Moscow to conclude a tripartite alliance against Germany. It can be assumed that London first wants to have the treaty with Moscow in dry cloths before further talks on this level with Berlin are started. Thus time

and opportunity are wasted. On August 19, the British-French-Russian negotiations fail. Then it is again the British who want to negotiate with the German government. This will be the subject of this book later on. On August 22, France's Prime Minister Daladier asks U.S. President Roosevelt to convene a world peace conference in Washington. France would agree and Hitler would probably cancel. This would at least settle "the moral question" of this dispute.²⁶⁷ The result of this proposal is not overwhelming. On August 24, Roosevelt sends a peace message to Hitler and Polish President Moscicki. Roosevelt asks "for a certain time to refrain from any aggression" and to come to an understanding through direct negotiations.²⁶⁸ Hitler, who has been trying to do just that for 9 months without success, leaves Roosevelt without a reply. Moscicki writes back that it is not Poland that wants anything here.²⁶⁹ Not a word here about Danzig or the requested extraterritorial transit routes. ²⁶⁶ Dahlems, page 48 ²⁶⁷ Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Road to War, page 594 ²⁶⁸ British War Bluebook, Documents 124 and 125 ²⁶⁹ Rassinier, page 276 quoted from Polish White Paper, Document 90 ⁴⁵⁹ The last mediation proposal worth mentioning comes from Mussolini. On August 31, the day before the war begins, the "Duce" invites the heads of government of Germany, Poland, France, and England to a peace conference for September 5. As the main topic of discussion, he proposes to review the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles as the origin of the present crisis.²⁷⁰ This is the first proposal that gets to the root causes of the threat of war, but the proposal comes too late. The conflict of nations sown in Versailles should have been eliminated in due time by those who instigated it. Instead, France and

Poland are stiffening their positions on Versailles. With its guarantee for Poland, England spoiled the last chance for the Poles to move. And Hitler is left to repair the damage of Versailles bit by bit over several years, until he has had enough success, practice and experience to dare to go to war with Poland. On the day of Mussolini's proposal, German radio reconnaissance intercepts Polish Foreign Minister Beck's instruction to Lipski in Berlin that he should not accept the new German negotiating proposal. Thus, even this proposal from Italy, good in itself, is of no value to Hitler by the time he learns of it. By the time Hitler is informed of Mussolini's proposal, German troops are already rolling into their initial positions for the attack against Poland. There are not even nine hours left until then. Hitler, after nine months of futile negotiations, does not want to continue treading water. So he does not take Mussolini's proposal any further. Too late. At the end of the multitude of futile attempts to prevent the war over Danzig by incantation or by mediation, only two states remain, wrestling over the open question of whether or not Germany should be allowed to settle the dispute created at Versailles on its own. They are Great Britain and the German Reich. At the heart of the dispute is Hitler's fatal decision to make the Czech Republic a protectorate. This outraged the British government so much that it does not want to let something similar happen a second time. As a result, the guarantee for Poland comes about, and this tempts the Warsaw government to declare any change in the status of the Free State of Danzig a *casus belli*. Thus, the Reich government can no longer reunite the German city of Danzig with Germany without war with Poland. War with Poland, even if only for Danzig, means war with England. France only plays the role of the "loading gunner". Thus the question "reunification with Danzig or not" has become the question "war between Great Britain and the German Reich". And above all, this is what the last week before the war is all about. 270 Rassinier, page 296 460 The Last Week Before War Adolf Hitler is determined to solve the open Danzig question, the problem of transport links between East Prussia and the Reich, and the protection of minorities for the Germans in Poland before winter by negotiation or, if that is not possible, by war. The generals have so far warned warned several times that a war with Poland would also entail war with England, with France, and, if prolonged, war with the United States, and that a two-front war could not be won by the Wehrmacht. But it also advised that military operations, if war did occur, would not be allowed to begin after September 2 because of climate and weather data.²⁷¹ Road and trail conditions would soon become too difficult for the Army and flying weather for the Luftwaffe thereafter in Eastern Europe. Thus, Hitler's decision is not free from the influence of this date. Wednesday, August 23, 1939 Nine days before the outbreak of war. The sensation of the morning press worldwide is the news of the flight of the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to Moscow. It is said that the German Reich government and the government of the Soviet Union have agreed to conclude a non-aggression pact. Prime Minister Chamberlain, having learned shortly before of the failure of the British effort in Moscow and of Stalin's swing, immediately sends Ambassador Henderson with a letter to Hitler. Hitler first assures Henderson of his personal esteem, but then complains of England's attitude toward Germany on the Danzig question: 272 "Germany has made Poland a decent and fair offer:" 272 "He (Hitler) sees no possibility of negotiation because he is convinced that the British Government cares nothing at all about such a settlement." Henderson counters, "that the German offer had been made, but it had had the character of a dictate." Hitler comes to the fundamental point and regrets that England is making an enemy of him "who himself wanted to be England's greatest friend." He emphasizes "that Germany has never done anything to harm England, yet England is opposing Germany." 271 v. Below, page 190 272 This and the following quotations are from Conversation Transcript ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 200. 461 And with regard to Danzig and to Poland, "that England takes the position: rather war than something to the advantage of Germany." Henderson's reply puts things in British terms: "they had only opposed the principle of force." Hitler threatens "that if there is the slightest Polish attempt to take any

further action against Germans or against Danzig, he will intervene at once." ... "At the next Polish provocation I will act." Since assaults against Germans are commonplace in Poland and incidents on Danzig's borders are not uncommon, Hitler is thus saying that Germany is on the verge of attacking Poland. This is the end of this conversation. Hitler has made it clear to Ambassador Henderson that he blames England for the fact that negotiations with Poland are now futile. And Henderson has tried to make it clear to Hitler that war with Poland entails war with Britain, even if the Soviet Union is now no longer on England's side. Figure 13: Sir Nevil Henderson, British Ambassador to Berlin

Chamberlain's letter, which Henderson delivers to Hitler, once again foregrounds Britain's loyalty to the alliance with Poland, but it also contains two offers.²⁷³ The first is a play for time with little sense of the drama of that crisis. Chamberlain proposes to suspend negotiations with Poland until German-Polish relations have cooled and calmed. The second offer must entice Hitler. The British premier holds out the prospect of later negotiations which, in parallel with the Danzig question, "might at the same time settle the 273 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII Appendix to Document 200 462 great future international relations, including those which interest England and Germany." This is in disguise the offer to rearrange Anglo-German relations along with the settlement of the Polish question. This is what Hitler has been trying to do since he took office. Furthermore, Chamberlain's letter contains the very direct warning that a war between Britain and the German Reich would be a long war with many fronts. Tragically for the German people and many other peoples, Hitler does not realize the dimension of the warning and its consequences. Great Britain wants and will turn the war over a single Baltic Hanseatic city into a world war. It will muster the Dominions from Australia to India to Canada, reactivate the old brotherhood in arms with the United States, and carry the war to Germany's far flanks, from Norway in the north to Greece in southern Europe. Hitler is in a hurry with the answer. As early as 6 p.m. that same day, he hands Henderson the reply letter to Chamberlain.²⁷⁴ He emphasizes the desire for friendship with Great Britain, complains about Poland, and rolls the ball back to England with a reference to responsibility for Versailles. "Germany," Hitler writes, "has never sought conflict with England and has never interfered with English interests. It has, on the contrary, though unfortunately in vain, endeavored for years to acquire English friendship." So much for Hitler's response to the offer of comprehensive negotiations. He then turns to Poland and continues, "Germany was prepared to solve the question of Danzig and that of the corridor by a truly uniquely generous proposal by way of negotiations." England, he argues, sabotaged this offer by creating sentiment against Germany and by issuing a guarantee to the Poles. Germany will no longer tolerate pressure and ultimatums on the German minority in Poland and against the city of Danzig, he said. "Regardless of this, the issues of the corridor and Danzig must and will find their solution." The letter ends with the sentences, "The question of dealing with European problems in a peaceful sense cannot be decided by Germany, but in the first place by those who have persistently

and consistently opposed any peaceful revision since the crime of the Versailles Dictate. I have fought all my life for an Anglo-German friendship, but have been convinced by the conduct of British diplomacy we 274 ADAP, Series D, Vol. VII, Document 201 463 n least so far of the futility of such an attempt. If this were to change in the future, no one could be happier than I. gez. Adolf Hitler" This first exchange of notes in the last week before the war still gives hope for understanding. Both heads of government assure each other that they want to avoid war. But each pursues a double strategy, which is contradictory in itself. Chamberlain only wants to tolerate a negotiated solution to the problems at hand, but with his promise of a guarantee to the Poles, he has de facto blocked this route himself. And Hitler wants both a rapprochement with England and no further treading water on the Danzig question. This, too, is hardly compatible. Hitler is faced with "either or," and he is preparing both: Negotiations and war. On the afternoon of August 23, he sends for the Wehrmacht adjutant, Colonel Schmudt, and

orders him to have the High Command of the Wehrmacht prepare the attack on Poland for August 26 at 4:30 in the morning.²⁷⁵ After the letter to Chamberlain and the conversation with Schmundt, Hitler sends another telegram to Daladier, the French prime minister. In it, he states, among other things, "I have no enmity whatsoever against France. I have personally renounced Alsace-Lorraine, and I have recognized the Franco-German border. I want no conflict with your country, and I wish only to maintain good relations with it. Therefore, the thought that I would have to fight France because of Poland is very hard for me. Well, the Polish challenges have brought about a situation for the Reich that cannot last..... I will not attack France. But if it takes part in the conflict, I will go to the end." ²⁷⁶ Daladier's reply is received by Hitler on August 27. Still to come on August 23 are Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop's Moscow negotiations with Stalin and Foreign Minister Molotov and von Ribbentrop's telephone call to Hitler seeking the green light for the "Secret Additional Protocol." It is late night before the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact bears the signatures of both sides. Thursday, August 24, 1939 Eight days before the outbreak of war. At 2 a.m. von Ribbentrop reports to the "Führer" on the telephone from Moscow that the treaty has been signed.²⁷⁷ Hitler now regains hope that ²⁷⁵ v. Below, p. 182 ²⁷⁶ Bonnet, p. 274 ²⁷⁷ v. Below, p. 183 464 England will reconsider its role in supporting Poland in light of the new situation, and that Poland will also be more willing to negotiate over Danzig.²⁷⁸ Just as there are forces in England and France on the one hand that would welcome a concession by the Polish government and others that would prefer to stop the German expansion of power through war, so too in Germany there are men close to Hitler who want to prevent a war as well as those who urge a settlement with the Poles. In Berlin it is the foreign minister, of all men, von Ribbentrop, who is apparently willing to risk the warlike solution. Working against him are his secretary of state, von Weizsäcker, and the commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Marshal Göring. The Marshal, at the same time Minister of Aviation and President of the Reichstag, has the same access to the "Führer" in the functions as von Ribbentrop. When Göring reads Chamberlain's and Hitler's letters, he gets hope for a way out of the now

German-English dispute over the Danzig-Polish question. He sees a real chance to prevent war as the outcome of this crisis. But Göring also sees that von Ribbentrop is pushing Hitler toward war rather than slowing him down. So Göring tries to circumvent the foreign minister. To do so, he uses contacts he himself has with England and the Swedish middleman who had tried to arrange an Anglo-German-Italian-French crisis conference on August 8, the industrialist Dahlems. Fig. 14: The Swedish peace mediator Birger Dahlems ²⁷⁸ v. Weizsäcker Memoirs, page 253 465 The marshal calls the Swede to Berlin, tells him of the threatening nature of the situation that has since arisen, regrets that the four-power conference he proposed has not come about, and asks him to fly to London the following day and convey to the British government that the German Reich government wishes to come to a German-British understanding. Goering affirms that he will use all the influence he has in the government to bring about such an understanding.²⁷⁹ ²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in London, Prime Minister Chamberlain delivers a speech to the House of Commons.²⁸⁰ ²⁸¹ He reaffirms the loyalty of the British to the Poles. He complains that the German Imperial Government, instead of calmly discussing the customs inspector dispute in Danzig, instead of negotiating the fate of the German minority in Poland, and instead of negotiating all other differences, is now uncompromisingly demanding Danzig, while "people in Poland were ready and are always ready to discuss differences with Germany." Chamberlain also dismisses Hitler's request that Eastern Europe be recognized as a German sphere of interest, saying that England stood for the freedom and independence of peoples. The speech is as understandable from the British point of view as it seems hypocritical from the German point of view at the time. Poland is now just as uncompromising as the German Reich on the Danzig issue. And Great Britain keeps its own spheres of interest in "Middle East Asia" and in Africa. It cares little for the freedom and independence of

colonially held peoples from India to Nigeria. Still, the speech does not raise new hurdles. Ambassador Henderson obviously views the behavior of the Polish government differently from his government leader in London. Late in the morning, he reports by telegram to the Foreign Office what he considers to be the outcome of his last two talks with the German chancellor: "With the treaty with Russia in hand," Henderson says, "the initiative now lies with Hitler. I now expect an ultimatum to Poland. Now it is almost impossible to negotiate with Hitler....It was devastating because I felt from the beginning that the Poles had acted extremely stupidly and not wisely. That is how it is now. Perhaps Providence believes that we must first learn through war not to do such things again 281." Around noon, a message from the Reich Press Chief is placed on Hitler's desk, according to which the signing of an English-Polish mutual assistance treaty can be expected today. Thus, for the time being, Hitler's hope that last night's German-Soviet treaty would induce the British to 279 Rassinier, page 277 280 British War Bluebook, Document 64 281 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 257 466 might be persuaded to advise the Poles to give in on the Danzig question.²⁸² He sends for General Keitel, Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, and asks him if the attack against Poland can still be halted and postponed.²⁸³ He thus says Hitler must "gain time for further negotiations." The immediate inquiry to the army confirms that this is possible, and Hitler orders the attack postponed to an unknown date. The "Führer" obviously still prefers a "solution without bloodshed" on this day, August 24. Throughout the day, the governments in London and Warsaw exchange lively information. England's ambassador in Warsaw, Sir Kennard, telegraphed to London that the German complaints about alleged mistreatment of members of minorities were distortions of facts and exaggerations.²⁸⁴ Thus, not 76,000 Germans had fled Poland illegally, but at most 17,000. And Kennard complained about the very high number of attacks against members of the Polish minority in Germany. It is not clear to what extent the Kennard account is believed in London, given the earlier debates in the House of Commons about the terrorization of the Ukrainian and German minorities in the new Poland. Meanwhile, in Paris, they are trying to make peace in their own way. "The French government strongly recommends to the Polish government to beware of any military reaction and to respond with diplomatic action if the Danzig Senate should declare on its own initiative the annexation of Danzig to the German Reich." ²⁸⁵ What is surprising is that France does not throw this "self-annexation" into the Anglo-German-Polish debate as an idea and a compromise. Rather, it seems as if the French government, in this highly tense situation, prefers to wait until Germany herself reaches for Danzig and takes the blame for the war. In Washington everything remains Roosevelt's policy of quarantine against Germany, although last night's "Hitler-Stalin Pact" has changed Poland's position at a stroke. Early that morning in Moscow, German diplomat Herwarth von Bittenfeld reveals to an American colleague the contents of the secret supplementary agreement, just six hours old, which divides Eastern Europe into a Russian sphere of interest and a German one. The dividing line also divides Poland. At noon, Ambassador Steinhardt cables the contents of the Secret Additional Protocol to the State Department in Washington.²⁸⁶ Only a little later, President Roosevelt and his Secretary of State ²⁸² v. Weizsäcker Memoirs, page 254 ²⁸³ Keitel, pages 248 f ²⁸⁴ British War Bluebook, Document 52 ²⁸⁵ Bonnet, page 273 and French Yellow Book, File 222 ²⁸⁶ Bavendamm, Roosevelt's Road to War, page 592, and Rassinier, page 340. A facsimile of the Steinhardt telegram is included in Maser, pages 63 and 64 467 ter Hull the hot news and with it the danger threatening Poland from Russia as of now. Both Roosevelt and Hull do nothing to warn Warsaw, London, and Paris. Instead, in the evening, the President sends a message to the governments in Warsaw and Berlin to find a solution to the German-Polish problems through peaceful negotiations. A warning on the same day might have persuaded the Poles to accept Hitler's April 28 proposal. The final Hitler offer was a free port and economic privileges in Danzig, recognition of Polish territorial gains of 1920 in Posen,

West Prussia, and southeastern Upper Silesia, and a peace treaty for 25 years against extraterritorial routes through the corridor and Danzig, which in any case was not Polish but still a League of Nations mandate territory. A warning to the British might have prevented the treaty of guarantee for Poland, which is concluded on this day. But of importance to Roosevelt is Hitler's getting caught up in the Danzig dispute and obviously of less importance whether Poland survives. Roosevelt remains silent, as he does two years later before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Poland's contribution that day is that it closes the outer borders of Danzig at 11 o'clock that morning. The supply difficulties this soon creates in the city help to further inflame the mood of the Danzigers for a speedy annexation. Friday, August 25 Seven days before the outbreak of war. Hitler still hopes that the Polish government will give in at the last hour. He has still indefinitely postponed the Wehrmacht attack against Poland. Around 8 a.m., the Swedish mediator Dahlems takes off on Marshal Göring's behalf in a special plane from Berlin-Tempelhof to London. In the afternoon, he succeeds in getting through to Foreign Minister Halifax and delivering Göring's message. In Berlin, meanwhile, one piece of news follows the other, all of them not exactly pleasant for the "Führer". The first news to reach his desk are the night reports from the German-Polish borders.²⁸⁷ These are the reports of clashes and hand-to-hand actions on both sides. German farms on the Polish side of the border are still being burned. German shock troops retaliate for the arsons the same night on the opposite side. The flow of refugees also continues. Polish border troops attempt to drive the German refugee groups from the ²⁸⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pp. 383 f. with rifle and machine gun fire. The German retaliatory measures resurface the following day in a protest note from the Polish government to the Reich government: ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 330 468 border away. German infantry advanced into Polish territory and endeavored to free the fugitives. Nevertheless, eight people were shot last night while trying to escape. Moreover, another civilian passenger plane on its way to Königsberg has been shot at over the Baltic Sea by Polish anti-aircraft guns. Hitler is outraged. He spontaneously writes to Mussolini and tries to secure his support in the dispute with Poland without making this clear: "Germany's relations with Poland," Hitler says, "have been unsatisfactory since the spring, not through the fault of the Reich, but essentially through the intervention of England.

unsatisfactory and has been simply intolerable in the last few weeks. The news of the persecution of the Germans in this area are not invented press reports, but only a fraction of a staggering truth..... The Polish government's assertion that it is not responsible for the inhuman events, for the numerous border incidents (tonight alone 21 Polish border incursions), for the strafing of German airliners ... is not responsible, only proves that she no longer has the soldiery she has stirred up in her hands..... No one can predict under these circumstances what the next hour will bring...." ²⁸⁸ No sooner had the letter to Mussolini left than a preliminary report from the German Embassy reaches Hitler in London.²⁸⁹ These are the evaluation of the two speeches by Chamberlain and Halifax before the House of Commons and the House of Lords the day before, a picture of public opinion, the first evaluation of the morning press, and confirmation of the signing of the English-Polish mutual assistance pact. Hitler learns from the report that, judging from the embassy, the English people are apparently united behind the government and that the parties from left to right, as well as the press, consider the guarantee to Poland "a point of honor which can no longer be discussed." The report emphasizes, however, that in both speeches Chamberlain and Halifax avoided anything that might aggravate the present situation. This assessment from London makes Hitler's previous confidence that England might yet drop Poland in the end waver. The prospect of getting into a war with England over Danzig and the transit routes contradicts all Hitler's assurances to the generals that he would know how to prevent this. It was also incompatible with his strategic ideas of future German-British cooperation and friendship. Thus, on the morning of August 25, Hitler decided to further postpone the attack against Poland and to make England another

offer. He has the attack, originally planned for tomorrow, postponed again to 288 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 266 289 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 287, received in Berlin by telephone. ahead 25 August, in writing on 26 August 469 indefinitely.²⁹⁰ The reason given to Keitel is the same as the day before: "I need time to negotiate". He then summons the British Ambassador Henderson to join him in the Reich Chancellery. At 1:30 p.m., the two men face each other. According to Henderson's note of the conversation, Hitler speaks "in a serious voice and with every sign of sincerity."²⁹¹ He follows up on the last conversation in which Henderson had expressed hope for a German-British understanding and holds out the prospect of a grand, comprehensive alliance with England once the German-Polish problem is resolved.²⁹² Hitler then laments the 21 border incidents of the previous night and assures them that he will not tolerate such "Macedonian conditions" on Germany's eastern border in the future. He regrets if there would be war with England in this dispute with Poland. Immediately after the settlement of the German-Polish question, he would submit to the British Government an offer of a treaty guaranteeing the vested rights of the British Empire, assuring German aid wherever such aid was needed, reaffirming once more the finality of Germany's western frontier, and wishing to negotiate limited colonial claims peaceably. On the issue at stake, Hitler remains firm. He says: "The problem of Danzig and the corridor must be solved." And he adds: "If the British Government were to consider these ideas, a blessing might result for Germany and also for the British Empire. If it rejects these thoughts, there will be war." Henderson insists on England's alliance with the Poles, retorting that the German offer of an alliance could be considered only after the Polish question had been resolved by negotiation. Hitler counters that he has been trying for six months to settle the Danzig question in talks with the Polish government, that he has invited Foreign Minister Beck to do so several times, and that he has always declined. After Henderson has left, Hitler obviously doubts that he has been able to convince the Englishman. He once again put his concerns on paper in six points and immediately sent them to Henderson at the embassy. In point two of the list, Hitler strikes a tone that had been lacking until then. He asks that Britain assist in the recovery of Danzig and the corridor.²⁹³ This puts the ball in England's court, which could now mediate or urge Poland to accede to the moderate German demands. ²⁹⁰ Keitel, page 249 ²⁹¹ British War Bluebook, Document 69 ²⁹² The key words from the conversation are taken from the AA files: ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 265 and the British War Bluebook, Document 69 ²⁹³ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, pages 515 f 470 The doubts creeping over Hitler that day were not only about England's attitude. In the meantime, Italy had communicated in several notes, one slice at a time, that it would not participate in a war by Germany against Poland. Hitler had initially calculated that Italy would be able to bind Poland's ally France. That morning, the "Führer" finally realized that Italy could no longer be counted on in this respect. Hitler knows the Italian-French information channels and the French-British ones, and he knows that London will hear about the Italian rebuff to Germany just as quickly as Berlin. Hitler has again lost a trump card and England has gained one. One less reason for the British government to recommend that Poland give in on the Danzig question. Thus the attack option again becomes more likely for Hitler than the negotiated solution. He summons Generals von Brauchitsch, Keitel, and Halder to the Reich Chancellery and decides around 3 p.m. that Poland will be attacked on August 31 if there is no other solution by then.²⁹⁴ The final decision is therefore not scheduled until 5 p.m. on August 30. On the one hand, Hitler needs time to negotiate, and on the other hand, he must not lose sight of September 2 as the last possible day to attack militarily. Time is running out. At 5:30 p.m., the French ambassador Coulongre reports to Hitler. Hitler, still very tense from the day's news, approaches Cou-londre and opens the conversation: "In view of the seriousness of the situation, I want to make a statement which I ask you to convey to Herr Daladier²⁹⁵ . As I have already told him, I have no hostile feelings against France. I have personally renounced Alsace-Lorraine and recognized the Franco-

German border. I do not want any conflict with their country.... As a result, the thought that I would have to fight with France because of Poland is extremely painful to me. However, the Polish challenges have created a situation for the Reich that cannot continue. I made extraordinarily reasonable proposals to Poland several months ago, when I demanded the return of Danzig and a narrow strip of territory to link that city with East Prussia....The Polish government not only rejected my proposals, but it also maltreated the German minorities in the worst way.... France would not tolerate such a thing any more than Germany would. These things have gone on long enough, and to new 294 Keitel, Page 250 295 French Prime Minister 471 challenges I will respond with force. I make a point of saying it again: I wish to avoid conflict with your country. I will not attack France, but if it intervenes in the conflict, I will go to the end. Tell that, please, to Mr. Daladier from me." 296 Ambassador Coulondre replies, "Now that any misunderstanding has been cleared up, I make it a point to give you my word of honor as a soldier that if France were attacked, she would stand by Poland with her armed forces. But I can likewise give you my word of honor that the Government of the French Republic will do everything in its power to the last moment to preserve the peace. It will not fail to warn the Polish 297 Government to be careful." 297 Hitler retorts fiercely, "Why, yes why then did you give Poland a blank check?" Now the Frenchman comes out with the real reason for the war on whose threshold the world is standing these days: "This is the result of the events of last March 15. The occupation of Prague has made a deep impression on the minds of France. It has created a feeling of insecurity everywhere, causing France to tighten her alliances." 298 Hitler must have realized here, and in fact long ago, that he was now being presented with the bill for the illegal occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. On the bill, unspoken, were other items: - The denunciation of Versailles, - the annexation of German Austria, - the heresy of the authoritarian form of government, - the increase in power of the Reich in the past six years, - the rearmament of the Wehrmacht, - Hitler's demand for the return of the former German colonies, and - the German will to rise to supremacy in East-Central Europe. It is no longer a question of Danzig and transit routes alone, i.e. the questions, on which, in the past, England has mostly shared the views of the Germans. Danzig is now for Britain and France the hurdle before which they want the German Reich to stand or with which they want the Reich to fall. After the conversation with Coulondre, Mussolini's reply to Hitler's letter of the same morning arrives. The "Duce" informs the "Führer" of his full understanding 296 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pp. 396 f and French Yellow Book, Document 242 297 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 397 and French Yellow Book, Document 242 298 Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 397 and French Yellow Book, Document 242 472 nis for the German attitude toward Poland and acknowledges that such a tense situation cannot last indefinitely. But he also writes that Italy is not ready for war, and regrettably cannot participate in confrontations with Poland and its allies. 299 Hitler is dismayed. Italy refuses to support him. England continues to strengthen the Poles instead of pushing them to the negotiating table, and France is determined to go to war on Poland's side. Many telegrams also go back and forth between the British Embassy in Warsaw and the Foreign Office in London. At 1 a.m., Halifax in London asks Kennard in Warsaw to admonish the Poles to "refrain from any action that might place them in the role of aggressor." 300 At 01:20 a.m., Kennard telegraphs back that the French ambassador had already conveyed this admonition to Beck, the Polish foreign minister, the previous night. 301 At 02:35 a.m., another telegram goes to Halifax in London. Kennard reports that he has learned from Foreign Minister Beck that Goering has attempted to hold talks with Lipski in Berlin about Poland's attitude toward the German proposals. In doing so, Beck apparently portrayed possible German-Polish talks as a breach of Poland's loyalty to the alliance with England. And Kennard passes on this view of things as if it were his own. He writes in the 02.35 telegram that Goering had tried to drive a wedge between England and Poland at Lipski. "Herr Beck believes, " the report continues, " that the German Government is making

every effort to get a free hand in the East by such methods, and he thinks it should be noted that Poland does not want to be drawn into such an intrigue." 302 At 2 p.m. Kennard sends another assessment of the situation to Halifax in London: "... I distinctly doubt whether it will be of any use for the Polish Ambassador to seek a conversation with Hitler. Although I cannot, of course, judge matters from here, it seems to me that after Herr Hitler's reply (letter of Aug. 23, author's note) any such action would be regarded as a sign of weakness 303 and would provoke an ultimatum." 303 Paris and London are worried that the war will be started by Poland instead of Germany. In Warsaw, they characterize the attempts at talks from the German side as intrigue, and Kennard shows no inclination to persuade the Poles to talk with the Germans. 299 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document No. 271 300 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 272 301 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 273 302 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 263 303 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 270

473 In the meantime, the Swedish mediator Dahlems called on Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax in London. 304 At about 6:30 p.m., hours after the signing of the Polish-British Mutual Assistance Pact, Lord Halifax declared that he had been hopeful since Henderson's visit with Hitler this morning. Although he had not yet received an exact report on the outcome of this meeting, he hoped that the initiative to open official negotiations would make possible a peaceful solution. Halifax thanked Dahlems for his efforts and expressed the hope that he would now no longer need his services. Dahlems believes in a breakthrough and calls Marshal Göring at the Reich Chancellery at 10:20 p.m. to report. Göring thus appears very nervous to Dahlems. He explains that he fears the outbreak of war at any moment. The Anglo-Polish treaty of the morning, signed at the same time as Henderson's visit to Hitler, was taken by the "Führer" as an explicit declaration by England that it no longer wanted a peaceful solution. That same night, Dahlems informs the head of the Central Department of the Foreign Ministry in London how the treaty with Poland affects the German chancellor. He expresses his surprise that the treaty is misunderstood in Germany. Dahlems asks for a new appointment with Halifax. On this Friday, a week before the outbreak of war, the British government repeats its move of March 23 of that year. By signing the British-Polish Protection Treaty, it reaffirms its backing for the Poles. The Chamberlain government thus wants to prevent Hitler from annexing Danzig to the German Reich without Anglo-Polish consent. But it must also know that with Warsaw's position now once again strengthened, it is giving Hitler the choice of renouncing Danzig and the protection of the German minority in Poland, or going to war. With the British signature on the British-Polish treaty today, Chamberlain once again turns the key in the door to the conference room of the German-Polish negotiations. Saturday, August 26 Six days before the outbreak of war. At 7:50 a.m. Ambassador Henderson flies to London to deliver Hitler's proposal to the British government. At 11 a.m. Dahlems succeeds in calling again on Foreign Secretary Halifax and reporting to him the effect of the British-Polish treaty on Hitler. Dahlems is able to convince the minister that Marshal Goering in this Au 304

The following conversations are taken verbatim from the written Dahlerus account. See Dahlems, pages 54 f 474 genblick on the German side is the only personality of influence who can now save the peace. 305 The Swede asks Halifax to write a letter to Goering confirming England's earnest desire for a peaceful solution. Dahlems returns to Germany with the requested letter and delivers it to Goering. He considers the message so important that he immediately goes to Hitler and informs him of it. In the meantime it is midnight again. The letter and Dahlems' verbal transmission now make Hitler believe for a while that England is interested in a peaceful Danzig solution, but will declare war in case of a unilateral violent solution from the German side. Furthermore, the Swede directs that Ambassador Henderson will appear in Berlin the next morning with the British government's official reply to Hitler's six-point message. Shortly after midnight (27.8.) Hitler has Dahlems summoned to him in the

Reich Chancellery. Now the Swede goes from being the mediator between Goering and the British government to being the mediator between Hitler and the British. The late-night conference, which lasted more than an hour and a half, became a dialogue between Hitler and Dahlems.³⁰⁶ Göring, who was also present, did not intervene until the very end. It is remarkable that Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who had obviously given Hitler the wrong advice regarding England's reactions, was not called in. Hitler describes his and Germany's situation as he sees it. This is followed by a dialogue in which Hitler asks Dahlems about his experiences in England. Then the "Führer" resumes one of his monologues. He describes the unbeatability of the German army and air force. Dahlems, for his part, tries to make it clear to the German chancellor that the German Reich will never be able to win a naval war against the naval power of England. In the end, Hitler paces up and down his room, very agitated, before suddenly stopping and saying to the Swedish mediator, "You Herr Dahlems, have heard my view. You must go

to England at once to communicate it to the English government. I do not think that Henderson has understood me, and I sincerely wish that an understanding may be reached." It is decided to define Hitler's position precisely. Dahlems memorizes them so as not to have to carry compromising papers on the flight to London. They are again six points, some of which are now already more far-reaching than the six points Hitler had given Henderson: "1. Germany desires an alliance with England which shall eliminate all disputes of a political or economic nature in the future." ³⁰⁵ Dahlems, page 56 ³⁰⁶ The following conversation is taken from the Dahlerus account. See Dahlems, pages 61 ff ⁴⁷⁵ This offer is thus valid immediately and not after the Danzig solution, as Hitler had previously proposed. "2 England is asked to cooperate in giving Germany Danzig and the corridor, but with the exception of a free port in Danzig, which is to be at the disposal of Poland. Poland is to be given a corridor to the port city of Gdynia and to dispose entirely of this city and a sufficiently large area around it..." Now here, with the corridor, more is demanded than just extraterritorial transit routes. Since Poland has so far not responded of its own accord to the minimal solution proposed by Hitler, he hopes to

he hopes, with England's backing, to bring home to Germany the part of the corridor not inhabited by Poles. Göring seizes an atlas, tears out a sheet of map, and marks with a red pencil the area which, according to the new wish, should come to Germany. "3. Germany undertakes to guarantee Poland's borders. 4. Germany wishes an agreement on colonies, on the restitution of her former possessions or compensations. 5. Germany desires guarantees on the treatment of the German minority in Poland. 6. Germany undertakes to protect the British Empire, wherever it may be attacked, with her Wehrmacht." Dahlems agrees to present the new proposal to London as soon as possible. By now it is morning when Hitler, Dahlems, and Goering disperse. On the afternoon of August 26, after Halifax had dismissed Dahlems to Berlin with the letter to Goering, he still receives Count Raczynski, the Polish ambassador, and informs him of Henderson's talks with Hitler. In doing so, he passes on that "Hitler has not given the slightest hint ³⁰⁷ as to what he regards as the solution to the German-Polish problems. "307 Hitler's proposed solution, however, has been on the table since October 24 of the previous year: Danzig and extraterritorial transit routes in exchange for free port and trading privileges in Danzig for the Poles, border guarantees, and a peace treaty for 25 years. Halifax obviously does not think this is a solution. To be added for August 26 are French activities. Early at 1 a.m. Ambassador Coulondre reports from the German capital to Paris. He introduces a completely new proposal into the debate. Coulondre suggests a population exchange in all German-Polish border areas with a mixed population instead of giving in to the German demand for Danzig.³⁰⁸ The proposal goes to Warsaw the same day, where it meets with the approval of the Polish foreign minister. ³⁰⁷ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 390 ³⁰⁸ Bonnet, page 274 ⁴⁷⁶ On the same August 26, President Daladier receives Hitler's letter saying that Germany will not open war against France on her own.

Daladier and Foreign Minister Bonnet draft a reply reflecting the three known positions: France's loyalty to the alliance with Poland, the affirmation of the will for peace, and the proposal to negotiate with Warsaw.³⁰⁹ It is astonishing that the Coulondre proposal with the population exchange is not mentioned in this letter with a single word. Otherwise, the letter is hardly helpful. President Daladier indulges in a long succession of protestations of peace, all of which mean, "We French are peaceful, and whoever touches the Danzig status is not." Five days before the war, the French government does not think of its own accord to put the German-Polish problem it helped create at Versailles, the status of the Free State of Danzig, up for disposition and to induce Poland to give in on the matter. On this day, in the East Prussian district of Neidenburg, a Polish cavalry unit on a foray through German villages is engaged by the soldiers of a Königsberg artillery battery. 47 Poles fall in machine gun fire from the battery deployed there to protect the German border population. Sunday, August 27 Five days before the outbreak of war. In London, the Cabinet deliberates on Hitler's first proposal, formulated in six points. At the center of the deliberations is the fact that the invasion of Poland by the German Wehrmacht, expected yesterday, has failed to materialize. It is seen as a retreat by Hitler from his own policy of intransigence³¹⁰ rather than as a concession. As soon as Dahlems arrives in London, he is called in. The gentlemen examine Hitler's offer point by point. Then it is agreed that the Swedish mediator will fly to Berlin in Henderson's place with the English reply to Hitler, whose reaction to it will be immediately transmitted to London so that the London government can then deliberate again. And it is decided that Henderson will not follow to Germany until tomorrow with the then final and official Cabinet reply. This mode is accepted by Hitler by telephone and Dahlems flies to Germany where he is immediately met by Goering. By now it is late evening again. Goering does not consider the reply from London favorable in all respects and insists on presenting it to Hitler alone and convincing him in private of the usefulness of the reaction from London. The reply refers strictly to Hitler's points.³¹¹ It reads with regard to point 1 that England is prepared in principle 309 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 324 (French text) and AA 1939 2, Document 460 (German text) 310 Rassinier, page 284 311 The following English reply is taken from Dahlems, page 78 f. 477 to conclude a treaty with Germany that will secure peaceful development in the political and economic fields. With regard to point 2, the request to assist in the recovery of Danzig and the corridor, the English Government is sympathetic to a solution of the question and recommends direct negotiations between Berlin and Warsaw for this purpose. On point 3, the German guarantee of Poland's future frontiers, the British Government insists that Poland's future frontiers must be guaranteed not by Germany alone but also by Russia, Italy, France, and Great Britain. On point 4, the adequate guarantees for the German minority in Poland, the British Government accepts Germany's demand and recommends that this question also be settled by direct negotiations with Poland. The German claim in point 5 for the subsequent restitution of the former German colonies or for compensation is rejected by the British Government for the time being, but it holds out the prospect of later negotiations on the subject. The offer in point 6 to support the British Empire militarily if necessary was also rejected. Goering's doubts about Hitler's positive reaction are not entirely unjustified. Finally, the proposal to negotiate the Danzig and corridor issue German-Polish hits the sore spot of the German position. Foreign Minister Beck in Warsaw has not made one step toward Germany on the Danzig transit question since October of last year. The British and French guarantees and promises of March and May and of two days ago have strengthened Beck's resolve not to depart from them. The proposal to negotiate on the minority issue is also a mockery. Poland denounced the minority protection provisions signed in the Versailles Treaty and never enforced the two minority protection treaties with the German Reich in its own country. What should inspire the Poles now to change their minds about Danzig, the corridor, and the minorities? Goering would try to dissuade Hitler from invading Poland with this response from the British government. By the time he reports to the

"Führer" with the Chamberlain reply delivered by Dahlems, it is almost midnight. The Dahlems attempt to prevent disaster is not the only one that day. In the afternoon, the head of Foreign Minister Beck's cabinet, Count Lubienski, appears in Berlin and seeks out the chairman of the German-Polish Society, Dr. Kleist, an official in the Foreign Office. Lubienski succeeds in convincing Dr. Kleist that his boss in Warsaw is no longer "master of the proceedings" and that the Polish population, which has been in a war frenzy for months, will not tolerate any compromise on Danzig at this time. Beck, according to Count Lubienski, was quite realistic about Poland's situation, but he needed time until conditions in Poland had cooled down and normalized.³¹² Dr. Kleist ³¹² Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pp. 433 ff 478 immediately conveyed this view of the situation to von Ribbentrop, who reported it to Hitler on the same day. It is a small miracle that von Ribbentrop, who otherwise does not exactly exert a moderating influence on Hitler, here makes himself the advocate of his Polish colleague. But even this small spark of hope for peace quickly fades in view of the effects of the mood toward Germany that has been fanned in Poland. After von Ribbentrop's brief talk, Hitler replies, "As I have already told Herr Henderson, I like to believe that Beck and Lipski are full of good intentions. But they are no longer masters of the situation. They are prisoners of a public opinion which has been brought to white heat by exaggeration of their own propaganda and the boasts of the military. Even if they wanted to negotiate, they would not be able to. That is the real core of the tragedy. You see!" ³¹³ Hitler hands von Ribbentrop a telegram lying on his desk: "August 24, 1:15 p.m., commercial airliner " Lufthansa D-ABHF "fired on 15 to 20 km off coast of Hela at 1500 m altitude by Polish flak from Polish ship lying about 40 km from coast. Blast clouds of eight shots observed by aircraft. August 25, 12:47 p.m., commercial aircraft "Lufthansa D-AHIH" strafed 20 km from Heisternest by Polish flak. Shots so close that detonations were heard loudly in the plane. Among the passengers was State Secretary Stuckart. August 25, 2:18 p.m. and 3:25 p.m., Kriegsmarine Pillau seaplane strafed at height of Brösen at long distance from coast, second time with six rounds. Shots fired either from Heia or from Polish ship." Hitler remarks on the three reports: "When we call upon the Warsaw government to apologize to us, they will reply as usual that they are not to blame. This is pure anarchy. What is to be done?" Von Ribbentrop's only surviving attempt to persuade Hitler to give the Polish government more time is thus unsuccessful. On the same day the next report from Warsaw is received in London. Ambassador Kennard tells how he sees things: "As far as I can judge, the German claims about the mass mistreatment of members of the German minority in Poland are gross exaggerations, if not falsifications..... In any case, they are simply German provocations in connection with a policy that has turned the two nations ³¹³ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pp. 433 ff 479 against each other. I assume that this is being done in order (a) to arouse a war mood in Germany, (b) to impress public opinion abroad, and (c) to provoke either dejection or overt aggression in Poland. There is no evidence that the civil authorities have lost control of conditions in Poland..." ³¹⁴ Monday, August 28 Four days before the outbreak of war. Early morning 1:30 a.m.: Goering returns from Hitler having succeeded with the Dahle-rus message. Hitler, contrary to Goering's initial fears, has respected England's position. Goering immediately reports Dahlems comments on Hitler's reply delivered from London, despite bedtime. "With pleasure," said Marshal Göring, "Hitler welcomed England's desire to reach a peaceful arrangement with Germany. The Reich Chancellor would attach the greatest importance to bringing about a real alliance between Britain and Germany and not merely a treaty. Hitler, he said, respected England's decision to maintain its guarantee of Poland and likewise the English demand for an international guarantee of Poland's frontiers by the five Great Powers. He also accepted the English proposal that the questions of the corridor and Danzig should be finally settled by direct negotiations between Germany and Poland. Hitler had further approved the proposal of the British Government to postpone the decision on the colonies until the general demobilization and normalization of the

situation. He had also expressed his conviction that the English would do their best in the related negotiations to bring about a satisfactory solution." 315 Peace seems to have been saved. After all, Hitler's reaction indicates two things. First, he, who had repeatedly invited Beck to talk about Danzig and the transit routes since January 5, wants to wait again. What is even more remarkable, secondly, is his agreement to a guarantee of Poland's borders by England, France, Italy and the Soviet Union. This agreement suggests that his interest in conquering neighboring Poland is relatively small. In any case, if he has nevertheless contemplated annexation in recent months, he is now prepared to respect Poland's existence in perpetuity if he can win Britain's friendship in return. 314 British War Bluebook, Document 55 315 Dahlems, pages 82 f 480 Dahlems hastens to pass on Hitler's and Goering's reactions to London as quickly as possible with the help of the British Embassy in Berlin. He emphasizes that Britain must now convince Poland to begin negotiating with Germany immediately. Dahlems also conveys that it is extremely important that the official reply to be delivered later by Henderson mention that England is committed to persuading the Polish government to negotiate with Germany. 316 Around noon, Dahlems goes once again to see Field Marshal Goering, who in the meantime has gone to his mobile headquarters west of Potsdam. There, the Swede meets Luftwaffe generals Milch, Jeschonnek, Udet, Bodenschatz, and State Secretary Körner, who apparently all take the view that war must be avoided. 317 Meanwhile, in London, the British government's official response to Hitler's six-point offer is being finalized. At 2 p.m., a telegram is sent by Lord Halifax to Kennard, the British ambassador in Warsaw, with instructions to inquire immediately of the Polish foreign minister whether the Polish government is prepared to negotiate directly with the German government. 318 The telegram contains a move by London that will inevitably lead to war. Minister Halifax's first point in this order to Ambassador Kennard is to emphasize that London was making a precise distinction between the method of the recommended negotiation and the objectives of the negotiation. One would not misinterpret the suggestion of willingness to negotiate on the Polish side as agreement to Hitler's demands in any way. Negotiations, he said, were to be conducted on the principles of safeguarding Poland's essential interests and of talks "on an equal footing." Britain continued to stand behind Poland. The telegram contains not a single word on Danzig and not the slightest hint to Warsaw to meet the Germans halfway. The coded message is that the British Government will not misinterpret Poland's willingness to negotiate as a yielding on the Danzig question, and that Warsaw should not do so either. Poland was expected to negotiate and nothing more. After this message, London can be sure that Warsaw is stonewalling on Danzig. At 4 p.m. the reply from Warsaw arrives at the Foreign Office: "Foreign Minister Beck is extremely grateful for the proposed reply to Hitler and authorizes His Majesty's Government to inform the German Government that Poland is ready to enter immediately into direct negotiations 319 with the Reich." 319 316 Rassinier, page 285 317 Dahlems, page 85 318 British War Bluebook, Document 73 319 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 420 and Rassinier, page 286 481 At 5:00 p.m. Ambassador Henderson departs for Berlin with the reply in his luggage. At 10:30 p.m. he is received in the Reich Chancellery, according to protocol, with the honors usually reserved for heads of state. So great is Hitler's desire to emphasize the importance he attaches to Anglo-German rapprochement. 320 Before Henderson hands over Chamberlain's letter of reply, the two men exchange views. 321 The ambassador emphasizes England's loyalty to the alliance with Poland, stating, "The English people and especially Mister Chamberlain desired an understanding with Germany, but in carrying out this intention needed the cooperation of Germany, which would have to try to come to an agreement with the Poles by peaceful means." Hitler replied: "that he had been quite prepared to settle the pending questions with the Polish Government on a very reasonable basis. Now, however, things had come to a head to such an extent that new incidents and new acts of violence against the ethnic Germans were occurring daily....For him, the choice of his options now was to defend the rights of the

German people or to give them up at the price of an agreement with England. This, he said, was not a choice for him, but he had a duty to stand up for the rights of the German people." After about an hour of conversation, Henderson is dismissed by Hitler with the assurance that he will study Chamberlain's message carefully and give a written reply tomorrow. The first perusal of the letter from London apparently satisfies Hitler at first. At any rate, Dahlems, the Swedish mediator, is informed by telephone from the Reich Chancellery at 1:15 a.m. on Göring's instructions "that the reply is most satisfactory and that there is now great hope that the danger of war is over." 322 On the same day there is another glimmer of hope for the German side. Mussolini sends word to the Foreign Office that the German claim to Danzig must be recognized in principle, and that for all other questions, such as those of disarmament, raw material supplies for Germany, and colonies, he will suggest a conference of four or five.³²³ Tuesday, August 29 Three days before the outbreak of war. All of Europe is in a fever, and yet during the day in Berlin it looks at first like peace. 320 Rassinier, page 287 321 The following conversation is recorded in ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 384 322 IMT Interrogations, Volume IX, page 519 323 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 395 482 The Supreme Command of the Soviet Armed Forces announces the reinforcement of troops on the western border.³²⁴ Mobilization preparations continue in England, Poland, Germany, France, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands; in Poland and Germany, however, so far unofficially. Hungary is mobilizing against Romania and vice versa. The borders between Italy and France and those between France and Germany are closed by both sides. Italy puts its air force on alert in Libya, Ethiopia, Sardinia and Sicily. The Egyptian territorial army is mobilized. Spain has its Pyrenean fortresses put on defensive alert under high pressure. In Turkey, call-ups are made and the Dardanelles positions are manned. Reservists for 12 divisions have been called up in Belgium, and 100,000 men for frontier troops in Switzerland. And Ireland denies Great Britain the right to call up Irishmen living in England for military service. for military service. Also the USA although neutral make with the heart already mobile. Early in the morning, at 7:10 a.m., the evening report from the German Embassy in Washington arrives in Berlin. The chargé d'affaires there, Thomsen, writes: "In military circles, the mood toward Germany is much less influenced by press agitation than it is among the general public. In the latter, Germany is generally regarded as a disturber of the peace and an aggressor who refuses to solve political problems other than by force...I judge the situation as follows: 1. Roosevelt considers neutrality reprehensible. 2. America wants to intervene militarily a. if England and France are in danger of defeat, b. probably also if there is certain prospect of Anglo-French 325 final victory..." 325 About 11 o'clock in the morning, Goering and Dahlems see each other again. The marshal shakes hands with the Swedish mediator and says excitedly, "Peace remains! Peace is assured." 326 In the meantime, the Reich Chancellery is carefully evaluating the reply letter from the British government. Superficially, the written text agrees with Dahlem's previously delivered reply. "England shares the desire for mutual understanding. The German-Polish agreements must secure the essential interests of Poland. 324 The mobilization measures below are taken from Archives of the Present, Volume 1939-1940, pages 4193-1195 325 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 378 326 Dahlems, page 88 and IMT Negotiations, Volume IX, page 519 483 Poland's new borders are to be guaranteed by five powers. The minority problems should be negotiated 327 only after a period of calm. "327 Hitler obviously agrees with all this. But the letter also contains three passages where it is not clear whether Hitler, Goering and von Ribbentrop understand what they say and what their consequences are. It says: "His Majesty's Government trusts that the Herr Reichskanzler will not believe that His Majesty's Government, because it takes its obligation to Poland very seriously, is for this reason not anxious to use all its influence to bring about a solution satisfactory to both Germany and Poland." Stripped of all phrases, the sentence reads, "We hope that you will not believe that we will not work for a solution

satisfactory also to Germany." One can also shorten the sentence as follows: "We do not hope that you believe that we will do nothing for you." That, carefully read, is not a promise that the British Government will work for the coming of a solution satisfactory to Germany. And this was precisely what Hitler had asked Chamberlain to do in his letter two days earlier. The sentence dazzlingly expressed gives the appearance of British support for the German request and yet says absolutely nothing. The day before, the same British government had instructed Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw not to advise the Polish Foreign Minister Beck to make any concessions in the matter. Only negotiations were to take place. Thus the phrase quoted above with "His Majesty's Government ..." in connection with the Kennard instruction is nothing but a brilliantly worded deception of Hitler; perhaps a revenge by Premier Chamberlain for Hitler's breach of word in regard to Czechia. The second doubtful passage in this reply letter concerns Poland's willingness to negotiate. It says: "His Majesty's Government has already received a definite assurance from the Polish Government that it is prepared to enter into discussions on this basis." The sentence must have led Hitler to believe that the day before, at Britain's urging, the Polish Government had agreed to make some move on the matter. But this was precisely what the Kennard advice sought to prevent. The gist of the British advice to the Poles has been, "Speak yes, move is not required on our part," or in a metaphorical way, "Go to the ball, but don't do the dancing." With this phrase, the British government suggests the now open path of negotiations, which in reality it had Ambassador Kennan obstruct. 327 AA 1939, No. 2, Document 463 and ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 3 84 and Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 447 484 A third and equally momentous hitch in the reply from London is the order in which the preconditions are now to apply. Hitler has offered a friendship pact if Britain will help with the Danzig matter. The British government replies: if Germany and Poland have resolved the Danzig dispute by negotiation, England is prepared to conclude a friendship pact. Hitler's precondition for Germany's settlement with Poland is the friendship pact with England. Chamberlain's precondition for the friendship pact with England is Germany's settlement with Poland. So the British still show Hitler the closed door in Warsaw and say "Go through." So Hitler's calculation or hope does not work out on this point either. Nevertheless, his distant goal of a settlement and a friendship pact with Britain is now more important to him than the proximate goal of Danzig. He goes along with Chamberlain's difficult conditions. Hitler responds with a note in which he first accepts the conditions from London.³²⁸ Then he repeats once again the complaint against the harassment of the ethnic Germans in Poland and declares that this state of affairs cannot be tolerated for another few weeks or even days. In this letter, Hitler demands the revision of the Versailles Treaty insofar as it concerns Danzig and the Corridor and otherwise assures the continued existence of the state of Poland under the Five-Power Guarantee. So far Hitler follows the lead of the British government. Only at the end of the letter does he set up a hurdle over which the British and the Poles must now pass. He ends his letter with the expectation that the German-Polish negotiations will now really begin within 29 hours: "Under these circumstances the German Reich Government agrees to accept the proposed mediation of the Royal British Government for the dispatch to Berlin of a Polish personage furnished with all powers. It expects the arrival ³²⁹ of this personage on Wednesday, August 30, 1939." ³²⁹ That means: start of negotiations at the latest at midnight the day after, without another Anglo-Polish play for time. Hitler is now obviously wavering between hope in the mediation skills of the London government and the expectation that the Warsaw government will not budge. In many respects, the German Chancellor has his back against the wall. He wants to see action from the British as soon as possible or find out if he is being stalled. He cannot hold the mobilization and deployment of the Wehrmacht in abeyance much longer. Either the forces must be withdrawn in the foreseeable future or invade Poland no later than September 2. Moreover, Hitler does not want the Polish and ³²⁸ AA 1939 No. 2, Document 464 and ADAP, Series D, Volume VII,

Document 421 329 AA 1939 No. 2, Document 464 and ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 421 485 French press to attest to "soft knees" as they had three weeks ago. Thus, he must soon balance the halt order for the marching Wehrmacht with a negotiating success. And in this situation probably quite decisive: he cannot leave the harassed German minority in Poland without help for long. At 7 p.m. Hitler hands his reply to Ambassador Henderson, who immediately skims it, reading it. Henderson is at first relieved to find that Hitler accepts all the English conditions. The relief changes to dismay when he reads the conclusion of the letter. Henderson does not make the slightest secret of his horror 330 at such a short deadline: 330 "You give the Polish negotiator 24 hours to get to Berlin. The deadline is much too short. Why such a hurry? It sounds like an ultimatum. " "But not at all," Hitler counters. "This sentence only emphasizes the urgency of the moment. Bear in mind that a serious incident may occur at any time when two mobilized armies are facing each other." Henderson insists: "The deadline is insufficient. " "No," Hitler continues. "It is now a week that we keep repeating the same thing. We exchange notes and answers incessantly. This nonsensical game cannot go on forever Think of the guns that may go off by themselves at any moment. Remember that my people are bleeding day by day." The conversation between the two men is agitated and unkindly heated at the end. When Henderson sees that he cannot persuade Hitler to postpone the meeting, he asks at the end of the exchange of notes whether a Polish negotiator coming to Berlin would be received kindly and whether the negotiations would be conducted on the basis of complete equality. Hitler assures both. He also holds out the prospect of preparing a new offer for Poland. After the visit to Hitler, Henderson immediately asks his Polish colleague Lipski to join him at the British Embassy. He informs him about the conversation with Hitler and the contents of the letter to Chamberlain. The Briton offers his Polish colleague all the persuasion he is capable of and insists on the immediate dispatch of an authorized negotiator from Warsaw to Berlin. Then Henderson calls his

French and his Italian ambassadorial colleagues in Berlin, quickly puts them on the spot, and asks them both to call the governments in Paris and Rome immediately and advise them to intervene immediately in Warsaw. The 330 Reproduction of the following conversation from Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, pp. 473 f 486 Polish Foreign Ministry, Henderson urges, should send to Berlin as soon as possible a negotiator authorized to negotiate. Then, only at 9 p.m., Henderson addresses Minister Halifax in London by telegram. He announces Hitler's letter, which he wants to have translated into English before sending it. As time is pressing, he points out that Hitler expects an authorized Polish negotiator in Berlin tomorrow, August 30. He also advises that Hitler has accepted the terms of the last Halifax proposal and that the note from Berlin expresses that the German proposals were never intended to restrict Poland's vital interests.331 An hour later Henderson sends the translated Hitler

reply. In the text accompanying Hitler's letter, he sums it up: "Hitler is not bluffing. He is ready to strike. The only chance we have left to prevent war is for Beck to come to Berlin." 332 Henderson is obviously honestly struggling for peace. Meanwhile, in Warsaw, Foreign Minister Beck, Defense Minister Kaspr-zycki, and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Marshal Rydz-Smigly confer. Their conclusion: there will be no concession on the Danzig question, and Poland must resist the German demand militarily. A decision to negotiate, as strongly advised by the British, does not materialize. In the afternoon, the Council of Ministers meets and decides to officially announce General Mobilization for tomorrow, August 30.333 Both countries, Poland and Germany, have been careful not to do so because of the demonstrative effect of this step. The French ambassador and the British ambassador, who wanted to prevent the war from being provoked by Poland at the last moment, immediately protested to the Polish Foreign Ministry against the decision to mobilize publicly. Paris and London now expect negotiations and not escalation from Warsaw. If Warsaw now triggers the war and not Berlin, there is no case of alliance, and Paris and London would have no legitimacy under

international law to settle accounts with Germany. The protest of the two ambassadors cannot prevent what should be prevented. Still at about 6 p.m., the Polish foreign minister assures British Ambassador Kennard that the general mobilization can be kept secret.³³⁴ But just an hour later, he admits that this is now no longer possible. Foreign Minister Beck appends to the confession the fateful question: ³³¹ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 490 ³³² Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 493 ³³³ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 478 ³³⁴ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 475 487 "Would Her Majesty's Government answer for instructing the Polish Government to refrain from a measure vital to the security of Poland ³³⁵ and thereby endanger Poland's existence?" ³³⁵ After the Hitler-Henderson conversation, Marshal Goering at the Reich Chancellery and Sir Ogilvie-Forbes's second man at London's embassy are informed almost simultaneously of the content and course of the meeting. Both are dismayed and contact Dahlems only a few minutes after each other. Both are full of concern that the dispute over the too-short deadline and the resulting disgruntlement could end the English government's willingness to mediate further. Ogilvie-Forbes is Dahlem's contact at the British Embassy in Berlin. Goering is very upset, blames Henderson for the disgruntlement -which is probably unjustified-, complains about the "insolence" of the Poles toward Germany, and mentions that just today again five German refugees on their way from East to West had been shot by the Polish military while trying to swim across the Warta. This, he says, has greatly enraged Hitler.³³⁶ Marshal Göring asks the Swede to fly at once to London and give the English Government an accurate report of the evening's events, to emphasize Germany's further determination to come to an understanding, and to announce that "Hitler intends to convey to Poland in the course of tomorrow a note which would contain such easy terms as would certainly be accepted by Poland and endorsed ³³⁷ by the English Government." ³³⁷ Goering and Dahlems separated at 2 o'clock that night. The Swede, before going to bed, informs Ogilvie-Forbes so that he can report to London as soon as possible. Wednesday, August 30 Two days before the outbreak of war. At 4 o'clock in the morning Henderson receives instructions from London to inform the German government that they are carefully examining the German note and that they do not expect to get an authorized negotiator from Warsaw to Berlin within 24 hours. The warning that no Pole would come on this "last" day is not passed on by Henderson to either Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop or Hitler. ³³⁵ Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 482 ³³⁶ Dahlems, page 95 ³³⁷ Dahlems, page 99 488 All morning a group of diplomats and lawyers, following Hitler's instructions and Goering's suggestions, works out the new offer of negotiations to the Polish government. At 5 o'clock Dahlems departs from Berlin. At 10:30 a.m. he is received at No. 10 Downing Street.³³⁸ Premier Chamberlain, in Dahlems' impression, has apparently reached the limits of his patience and lost faith in the usefulness of further negotiations.³³⁹ Dahlems now begins to argue "around the corner." He recounts the Poles' acts of violence against German refugees and other atrocities, and adds that if the Germans provoked the Poles' acts of violence, it was important to convince the Poles that they would not be tempted to commit the atrocities and refrain from doing so. Dahlems' reasoning is accepted. Thus, at 5:30 p.m., a telegram from London goes to Kennard in Warsaw with instructions to recommend the following to the Polish government: "The atmosphere might improve if the Polish government gave the following instructions to all military and civil authorities: 1. not to fire on German refugees or members of minorities who are causing trouble, but to imprison them. 2. to refrain from and prevent acts of violence against members of minorities. 3. to allow German minority members who want to leave Poland to leave. 4. to stop inciting radio propaganda. Please inform Foreign Minister Beck that the British Government is anxious to deprive Hitler of any pretext for resorting to excessive measures." ³⁴⁰ The telegram is a remarkable document in view of the Polish abuses so often denied by Kennard against members of the German minority in

Poland. Having dealt with this point, Dahlems once again interprets before Chamberlain and Halifax the details of Hitler's reply note with all the explanations that Goering had given him. He does not forget to mention that the German Chancellor announced that he would present a "generous offer" for Poland. Here a remark slips out of Chamberlain's mouth that is difficult to understand, even though his distrust of Hitler since the Czechoslovakia is very well founded. The English prime minister tells Dahlems that he suspects that Hitler's six-point reply and the new proposal to the Poles "is a feint to gain time." 341 So far, it has been 338 English Prime Minister's Office 339 Dahlems, page 101 340 British War Bluebook, Document 85 341 Dahlems, page 102 489 Chamberlain's and Halifax's reproach that Hitler is putting the Poles under time pressure. Now he himself is to try to stall for time. This does not fit together. One can only assume here that Chamberlain inadvertently let slip his real fear on this 30th of August, that Hitler could wait so long that Poland would start a war. Then England would be on the outside in terms of international law and would have no legitimacy to enter into a war with Germany. That an idea of this kind would not have been out of the air in Chamberlain's mind is shown by the last move of the Poles. They mobilized against England's advice. At 12:40 p.m., Goering informs Dahlerus by telephone from the Reich Chancellery, who is still conferring with the British. Goering announces that Hitler will most likely propose a plebiscite for the population in the corridor, so that they can decide for themselves whether their territory should be Polish or German. Furthermore, Göring announces that a right of emigration should be agreed upon for the minorities, who would continue to remain outside their own nation after new borders were drawn. 342 Göring and Dahlerus try in vain to get the British to act as "mediators" to persuade the Poles to negotiate with the help of these proposals. Chamberlain dismisses Dahlerus without further message to Hitler, von Ribbentrop, or Goering, and the Swedish mediator flies back to Berlin. There, by noon, the new proposal for the Polish government is ready. Hitler cut way back on the earlier German wishes from the time of his democratic predecessor governments.

East Upper Silesia and the province of Posen are finally written off. With regard to West Prussia and the Corridor, too, he has reduced again the demands which he expressed to Henderson only four days ago. Hitler obviously wants to convince the British with a very moderate proposal, so that they can in good conscience press the Poles. Nevertheless, the new proposal asks more for Germany than Hitler's March proposal, which was rejected by Poland. The list of German wishes and offers includes 16 points. 343 These include: - Danzig to return home to the Reich. - In the northern corridor, the population is to decide for itself in a vote whether the area will become Polish or German. - The port city of Gdynia would remain Polish in any case. - Depending on the outcome of the vote in the corridor, either Germany receives extraterritorial traffic routes to East Prussia or Poland receives extraterritorial traffic routes to Gdynia. 342 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 519 343 ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 458 490 Map 35: The German Proposals of August 30, 1939 (same as Map 33) - The special rights desired for Poland in Danzig are negotiated and Germany is granted equal rights in Gdynia. - The grievances of the German minority in Poland and those of the Polish minority in Germany are submitted to and investigated by an international commission. Both nations will pay compensation to affected aggrieved parties as determined by the commission. - In the event of an agreement under these proposals, Poland and Germany will immediately demobilize their armed forces. The treaty proposal is designed both to end the unfortunate separation of East Prussia from the German Reich decreed at Versailles and to ensure Poland's free access to the Baltic Sea. Moreover, it preserves the right of self-determination of the Polish, Kashubian and German 491 populations concerned in a contemporary manner. But as modern and democratic as the proposed settlement is, for the multiethnic state of Poland with its non-integrated minorities it contains a tremendous explosive power. The Ukrainian, Belarusian

and Czech minorities could later follow the German example and also want to leave Poland, which they dislike, by means of regional referendums. August 30, the Wednesday before the outbreak of war, passes without a Polish negotiator appearing in Berlin to receive Hitler's new negotiating proposal. Tension and nervousness rise in the Foreign Office and among the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, which is now fully deployed. Even in Hitler's immediate surroundings, it is not clear whether the "Führer" wants war or success through negotiations. So on this day everything hangs on the next step of the Poles. Hitler is skeptical about Poland. For him, not only Gdansk is at stake now, but above all his longed-for pact with England. And he knows that in this respect he is in the hands of the Poles. Göring sees everything somewhat more optimistically. He believes in fair mediation by the British. After all, he has given Dahlems the message to take to London that the "Führer" is preparing a generous offer to Poland.³⁴⁴ Instead of a Polish negotiator, the news arrives at 5:30 p.m. from the German embassy in Warsaw that since this morning the general mobilization has been publicly announced throughout Poland.³⁴⁵ When still no one is announced from Warsaw in the afternoon, and Hitler's hopes are fading, he summons General von Brauchitsch, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and General Keitel, the Chief of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, to the Reich Chancellery and postpones the start of the attack against Poland, previously set for August 31, by another 24 hours.³⁴⁶ New X-day is now September 1, attack time is 4:45. Hitler thus gives himself another chance to succeed without bloodshed. For him a war, two days before he opens it, is obviously still only the worse of two possible solutions. In Warsaw, meanwhile, the Polish government remains convinced that Hitler is bluffing and is in a tight spot himself.³⁴⁷ Hitler's last threat to invade Poland on August 26 is retrospectively seen as a failed intimidation maneuver that will now be followed by a second one. Foreign Minister Beck believes that all that is needed is to sit it out with good nerves. Rumors of an impending uprising by Wehrmacht generals and the certainty of ³⁴⁴ Dahlerus, page 102 ³⁴⁵ AA 1939 No. 1, Document 13 ³⁴⁶ v. Below, page 191 ³⁴⁷ Rassinier, page 292 492 English and French arms assistance support Beck in his belief. He is determined not to send anyone to Berlin. Nor does any impulse come to Poland from Paris and Washington on this day to lessen the risk of the outbreak of war. What is happening between Washington, Paris and Warsaw seems rather ghostly. They implore each other to remain firm. France's head of the foreign office, Leger, insists to Prime Minister Daladier that he will not force the Poles to negotiate with the Germans.³⁴⁸ He does this, which is unusual, in the presence of the American ambassador Bullitt, which is tantamount to a signal to Roosevelt. Something very similar was happening at the same time in Warsaw. There the American ambassador Biddle is told what the Poles think of Hitler's proposal and how to proceed. At 7:30 p.m., Biddle reports from Warsaw to Secretary of State Hull in Washington that Polish Foreign Minister Beck has said "40 times no" to Hitler's offer of negotiations.³⁴⁹ There is still no warning from the Americans to the Poles that they are now also threatened from the east. Late in the evening, Biddle is summoned once again to see Beck, who spells out to him the reasons why he will not compromise. Beck also says that he does not intend to send a negotiator to Berlin. By revealing his intention, Beck has gained Washington's blessing, since Biddle does not advise him against it. With this attitude on Poland's part, the eye involuntarily falls back on England, the mediator in the crisis. At 10 a.m., shortly before Dahlems' arrival at Prime Minister Chamberlain's, a telegram is received there from the British Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw.³⁵⁰ Kennard reports how he sees the present situation in Poland, and he communicates what he himself thinks of Hitler's so short a deadline and of Berlin as the venue for the German-Polish talks. Kennard is certain that Beck will not travel to Germany, and that Poland will fight and perish rather than Beck send anyone to Berlin. Kennard writes that the Polish government, which rejected the German March proposals without the backing of England, could not possibly accept further German demands now that it has England and France as allies on its side. What Kennard does not mention is what, then, he advised

Foreign Minister Beck to do. His report comes across as if he had advised Beck himself not to send anyone to Berlin.³⁵¹ 348 Bavendamm, *Roosevelt's Road to War*, page 603 349 Bavendamm, *Roosevelt's Road to War*, page 603 350 British War Bluebook, Document 84 351 English historian Nicoll claims in his book *England's War Against Germany* page 187 that "Ambassador Kennard constantly advised Polish statesmen not to negotiate but to go to war with Germany." Nicoll, however, cites no source for this assertion. 493 At 7:00 p.m. Halifax sends the next telegram to Warsaw. He instructs Kennard to inform Beck that the German side has accepted the British proposals for direct German-Polish negotiations and for the Five-Power Guarantee and has given assurances that Germany will respect Poland's vital interests. But not a word is mentioned of Hitler's new 16 points, some of which he already knows from Dahlems. Instead, "that it looks as if the German Government is working on new proposals-352 and when they arrive, one can see further." 352 Chamberlain is clearly trying to use up Hitler's reserve time. Toward evening it also becomes apparent to the German side that Foreign Secretary Halifax has allowed the entire deadline Hitler leaves open for a peace and negotiated settlement to pass without urging Poland to begin talks with the Germans immediately. At 6:50 p.m. he sends Henderson in Berlin instructions to "suggest to the German Reich Government that it invite the Polish Ambassador to receive the new German proposals and forward them to Warsaw." Halifax undermines Hitler's demand for an immediate opening of negotiations by writing, "We cannot advise the Polish Government that a Polish negotiator come to Berlin with powers to receive the German 353 proposals." 353 The undermining is perfect because Halifax sends the letter on its way so late that Hitler's deadline for the start of the German-Polish talks has passed by the time it arrives. At 11 p.m. in Berlin, Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop no longer expects a Polish envoy to appear. The deadline set by Hitler as an "expectation" has thus passed without result. Shortly before midnight, Ambassador Henderson then calls up completely unexpectedly at this hour to hand over the just mentioned answer of his government to Hitler's letter of yesterday and to explain that one had not been able to advise the Poles to talks here and now.

Thus August 30 has become a trial of strength between Chamberlain and Hitler instead of a struggle for peace. Hitler in Berlin had been hoping all day that Chamberlain, in view of the danger of war, would urge the Poles to approach Germany. After all, according to the British Prime Minister's letter of August 28, he had assumed that the British would now mediate between the Germans and the Poles. Hitler believes that the threat of the marching Wehrmacht will give the Poles legs. He is quite sure that his very moderate offer to Poland will also draw Chamberlain to the German side at the last hour. 352 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 539 353 British War Bluebook, Document 88 494 Chamberlain in London, meanwhile, has not given the Poles the slightest hint to reconsider their own position with regard to Danzig and the corridor. Instead, he is trying to buy time with notes back and forth in Poland's interest. He is not concerned with Danzig and minority issues. He is concerned with the fact that for three years Hitler has been enforcing what he thinks is right with threats to foreign countries. Chamberlain wants to "tame" Hitler. So he blows one of the last chances peace has by dragging out the mediation until Hitler's "deadline" comes. Chamberlain waits until Hitler loses face or patience. He lets August 30 pass with protestations of peace and diplomatic tactics instead of mediating single-mindedly in the spirit of a broker. On this day on the threshold of war, Hitler and Chamberlain are both prisoners of their experiences of recent years. Hitler knows that the victorious powers have made virtually no concessions to the German Reich since 1920 to improve the situation after the war. Everything achieved so far has been won by high-handedness or by the threat of force. Chamberlain knows that this has been so, and that he must not now tolerate any further concessions under threat. Perhaps many an Englishman is thinking on this day what Churchill pronounced in a House of Commons speech just before Hitler took office on November 24, 1932: "If the English

Government really desires to do something to promote peace, it should take the lead and reopen the question of Danzig and the Corridor on its part while the victorious States are still superior. If these questions are not resolved, there can be no hope of a lasting peace." 354 The Last Day Before the Outbreak of War, Thursday, August 31 The midnight meeting of Ambassador Henderson and Minister von Ribbentrop just mentioned turns into a disaster, contrary to both their intentions. The nerves of the two men are frayed after so many nights of negotiations during the past week. Henderson hands over Chamberlain's reply note of August 30, 6:50 p.m.³⁵⁵ He adds two verbal statements to the letter. The first concerns the mutual restraint now expected. He says that complete restraint could be expected from the Polish government only if provocations by the German minority in Poland ceased. Reports are circulating, he says, that the Germans are committing acts of sabotage in Poland which justify the most severe countermeasures on the part of the Polish Government. Von Ribbentrop loses his temper and counters that the ³⁵⁴ Kern, page 82 ³⁵⁵ The following conversation is taken from the transcript of the chief interpreter, Dr. Schmidt. See ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 461 495 most egregious acts of sabotage emanated from the Poles. The Foreign Office alone had reports of 200 murders of ethnic Germans in Poland. The conversation turns frosty. Second, Henderson refers to the German demand for the appearance of an authorized representative of the Polish government in Berlin. Henderson explains that the British government is not in a position to recommend to the Polish government to enter into this negotiation procedure. He suggests that the Reich government take the normal diplomatic route and hand over the German proposals to the Polish ambassador. Then Henderson asks von Ribbentrop if he could hand him the proposals in writing. Von Ribbentrop realizes that the British government has obviously not used its influence with the Polish government to persuade them to negotiate immediately.³⁵⁶ There is also no sign of negotiations from Poland at this time. Thus Ribbentrop may even suspect that England is giving Poland a free hand in the Danzig question. He suspects that, contrary to all assurances to the contrary, the British government is in fact no longer interested in persuading the Poles to give in, and that it is playing for time until Hitler gives up or triggers a war. Henderson's recommendation that the normal diplomatic route be followed sounds like anything but an English effort to find a quick solution. Von Ribbentrop must fear that the "normal way" will cost a lot of time and will again end at the Poles' "No. The German minister reacted angrily. Instead of trying to convince Henderson with Hitler's 16-point proposal, he reads out Hitler's proposal so quickly that Henderson cannot understand and retain everything. Finally von Ribbentrop says that the offer is obsolete now that no Pole has appeared in Berlin and refuses to hand it over in writing. The British mediation, insofar as it was one, has thus failed for the time being. Henderson leaves the Foreign Office and rushes to the Polish Embassy to leave no stone unturned. He informs Lipski of what he has retained of Hitler's 16 points from the conversation with Ribbentrop, that Germany only envisages the cession of Danzig and a referendum in the corridor, and that the proposals as a whole are not unreasonable.³⁵⁷ In view of the extremely critical situation, Henderson urges in all severity, Lipski should immediately call Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and ask that the new German proposals be handed over to him. Lipski stonewalled and declared that he could not do so without consulting Warsaw. Henderson insists on his advice and gets personal: 496 ³⁵⁶ IMT Negotiations, Volume X, page 311 ³⁵⁷ Henderson, page 273 496 "You haven't opened your mouth for four months. That will be held against you ³⁵⁸ when it comes to war." ³⁵⁸ Lipski now promises at least to telephone his government. At the time of the failed Ribbentrop-Henderson conversation, also shortly after midnight, Dahlems returns from London and goes directly to Göring to report. Dahlems assesses his London mission quite optimistically. He does not forget to mention England's desire for direct German-Polish talks. Goering's news to Dahlems is Hitler's 16 points. His comment, after reading them out, is that "Hitler, in his desire to reach an agreement with England, has worked out an offer to Poland which represents a great

concession on the part of Germany, which in its obviously democratic, just, and practically feasible nature must cause a great sensation, and which can be accepted by both Poland and England." 359 Both men, Goering and Dahlems, agree in the conversation that they are close to success in their struggle for peace. Dahlems now wants to know what came out of Ribbentrop's meeting with Henderson and calls the embassy from Goering's phone. Ogilvie-Forbes 360 informs him of the disaster of the conversation. It is now 2:00 in the morning. The Marshal and the Swede are still trying to save what can be saved. Göring authorizes Dahlems to dictate Hitler's 16-point proposal to Ogilvie-Forbes immediately by telephone. This is to get Hitler's offer to Poland to Henderson after all. Immediately thereafter, Goering informs Hitler of Ribbentrop's botched note delivery. Hitler expresses his appreciation to the marshal for his quick intervention. 361 Ogilvie-Forbes cannot immediately forward Hitler's proposal to Ambassador Henderson because he is still in the Polish embassy. He puts the 16 points written down in the telephone dictation on Henderson's desk and goes to bed. At 9 o'clock, the ambassador finds the letter and now knows the full text of Hitler's offer. At the same time, Goering sends Dahlerus to Henderson with a copy of the text so that he can be sure that the ambassador has the correct text in his hands. The latter takes advantage of the Swedish mediator's appearance to ask him to deliver the Hitler proposal to Lipski at the Polish Embassy as soon as possible, accompanied by Ogilvie-Forbes. At 11 o'clock the two emissaries arrive at Lipski's. The scene that now follows has something eerily unreal about it. 362 The embassy is all but emptied. 358 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 575 359 Dahlerus, page 105 360 chargé d'affaires at the British Embassy during the ambassador's absence 361 Rassinier, page 294 362 The following sequence of events is described by Dahlerus. See Dahlerus, page 110, and IMT Documente, Volume IX, page 521 497 The moving boxes are lined up in the hall. Embassy personnel are busy preparing to leave. In Lipski's almost empty room, Dahlems reads Hitler's proposal to the Polish government. Lipski interrupts after listening for a short while and declares that he does not understand the content, even though he speaks fluent German. The Swede leaves the room to make and hand over a copy of Hitler's note. Meanwhile

Lipski tells Ogilvie-Forbes, who has stayed behind, that he "has no reason whatsoever to be interested in notes or offers from the German side. He knows the situation in Germany..He is convinced that riots will break out here in the event of war and that Polish troops will march on Berlin." 363 Dahlems returns and hands Lipski the Hitler proposal. Meanwhile, it is shortly before noon. Both emissaries return to the British Embassy with haste and report to Henderson. Dahlems immediately from the Embassy also informs the Foreign Ministry in London about his strange meeting with Ambassador Lipski. He complains that Poland is obviously deliberately destroying any possibility of negotiation. Lipski had told him that the German proposals were not even worth considering. Dahlems is agitated because he realizes that his mediation efforts will probably fail because of the Poles' inflexibility. At the end of the report, the Swede emphasizes that he himself considers the German 16-point proposal to be extraordinarily generous. In London, the Dahlerus call is obviously considered extremely unhelpful. This is followed posthaste by an admonition from Halifax to Henderson "to please prevent persons not belonging to the British Embassy from using his telephone line in the future." 364 This admonition about telephone use, ridiculous in itself, fuels the suspicion that Foreign Secretary Halifax does not want any further mediation efforts at this point. During the past few hours, another report has arrived at the Foreign Office from Kennard, the ambassador in Warsaw. 365 Kennard reports that he had spoken the day before with Beck, the Polish foreign minister, and that he had promised him a written reply to the British mediation proposal by noon today. Beck had expressed great relief that the British government had in no way supported the German demands. Kennard expresses here what von Ribbentrop feared and what Göring, trusting in England's "fair" mediation, did not suspect. The British Re-giemng does not lift a finger to gain understanding in Poland for the German posi 363 Dahlerus, page 110, and IMT

Documents, Volume IX, page 521 364 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VII, Document 589 365 British War Bluebook, Document 93 498 tions. England did not make the slightest effort to settle the Danzig controversy, which she had herself created at Versailles. Shortly before Dahlems informs the Foreign Office in London of his strange meeting with Lipski about 12 noon, a telegram goes from there to Warsaw.³⁶⁶ Foreign Secretary Halifax asks Ambassador Kennard to join his French counterpart in asking the Polish government to confirm to the German Reich government that it "accepts the principle of direct German-Polish talks." This is still a far cry from the advice to send an envoy authorized to hold talks to Berlin. Apparently only minutes after the Dahlerus call about Lipski's behavior, two more instructions follow from London. Henderson in Berlin is instructed by telephone at about 1:00 p.m. to inform the Reich government that the Polish government would now send its ambassador to the Foreign Ministry.³⁶⁷ And Kennard in Warsaw is instructed

by telegraph at 1:45 p.m.³⁶⁸ to advise the Polish government immediately to send its ambassador in Berlin to the Reich government. Lipski should agree there to receive new German proposals and transmit them to Warsaw. Warsaw could then also submit proposals. Even this telegram does not contain any reference to the Polish envoy authorized to begin talks, as Hitler had demanded. It seems as if Chamberlain and Halifax were trying to stall Hitler on this point until he became weak or started the war on his own. Henderson immediately goes to the Foreign Ministry with his mission and informs Secretary of State von Weizsäcker of the news from London. The message is immediately passed on to Hitler, who is about to put into effect "Directive No. 1 for the conduct of the war," that is, the order to attack Poland with his signature. Hitler is said to have postponed signing it again after this announcement from London.³⁶⁹ The second instruction on the same matter, that from Halifax to Kennard, crosses with two dispatches from Warsaw to London and Berlin. In the first, from Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, to Halifax, the British Foreign Minister, the Polish government declares itself ready for talks with the German Reich government.³⁷⁰ This message passes through Kennard, and so it takes from about 12 noon to 6:30 p.m. before it reaches London. ³⁶⁶ British War Bluebook, Document 94 ³⁶⁷ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 509 ³⁶⁸ British War Bluebook, Document 95 ³⁶⁹ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 510. However, historian B.-M. does not provide a source reference on this matter. ³⁷⁰ British War Bluebook, Document 97 499 The second dispatch goes at 12:40 p.m. directly by radio from Beck to Lipski in Berlin, where it is intercepted and decoded by German radio reconnaissance. Two officially documented transcripts of the dispatch are available today. In the Polish one, Lipski is instructed to seek out Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and tell him, "This night the Polish Government was informed by the British of their discussions with the German Government on the possibility of direct negotiations between the German and Polish Governments. The Polish Government will consider the proposal of the British Government in a favorable spirit and will give the British Government a formal reply on this question in a few hours ³⁷¹." ³⁷¹ In the transcript of the recording of the German radio reconnaissance, this instruction has an appendix which reads, "Do not under any circumstances become involved in factual discussions. If the Reich Government makes oral or written proposals, you must declare that you have no authority whatsoever to receive or discuss such proposals, and that you are to transmit exclusively the above communication to your Government and first seek further instructions ³⁷²." ³⁷² The authenticity of this German documentation is supported by the fact that Lipski strictly adheres to this additional instruction, and that Kennard confirms it in a report of the same day.³⁷³ With the presentation of this overheard instruction to Hitler, Göring, and von Ribbentrop, the almost last chance for peace bursts. It is now 1:00 p.m., 16 hours until the Wehrmacht's appointed start of the attack against Poland. Göring and Dahlems are just discussing the further course of events when a messenger delivers the decoded Lipski directive.³⁷⁴ The marshal is fuming. He gives Dahlems a copy of the deciphered text. After about two hours of further deliberation,

the Swede suggests to the marshal that he now open negotiations with the British himself. Both men agree that Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, with his intemperance and his willingness to go to war with Poland, is not the right man. Both know that with the Poles there is now no quick understanding possible that could stop the Wehrmacht. Goering goes to Hitler to get permission for new talks with the British government. The "Führer" is more than skeptical, but he accepts the marshal's idea. He approves immediate talks by Goering with Henderson and 371 Polish White Book, Document 110 372 Dahlems, page 112 373 British War Bluebook, Document 96 374 The following events are taken from Dahlems' account. See Dahlems, pages 111 f 500 the proposal to have England help negotiate for Poland. Hitler knows that the now certain absence of a Polish negotiator would otherwise force him to abandon Danzig and the German minority in Poland or to attack Poland in 14 hours. The detour via London is thus also his last chance for an understanding with England. Hitler is obviously ready even now, on the afternoon before the outbreak of war, to call off the Polish campaign. Otherwise he would have held Göring at this hour. The only condition Hitler attaches to the Göring-Henderson talk is that a representative of a neutral state take part in it. That will be the Swede Dahlems. Dahlems, meanwhile, hurries to the English embassy to prepare the ground there. Henderson receives him kindly, but immediately expresses the suspicion that the Germans only wish to drive a wedge between England and Poland. Dahlems shows Henderson the deciphered text of Beck's directive to Lipski, making it clear to him that the only way to preserve peace in this highly explosive situation would be for Goering, with Hitler's approval, and Henderson to come to an understanding on a program for German-English negotiations. Dahlems writes of the meeting, "I am convinced that Henderson, although he listened to me attentively, was inwardly all the time of the definite opinion that the whole thing was a game of intrigue, an attempt to separate Poland and England in order 375 to give Germany an opportunity to attack Poland undisturbed." 375 At 4:30 p.m. the conference with Henderson, Goering, Dahlems, and Ogilvie-Forbes comes off. Goering gives Henderson a particularly warm reception. Both obviously make an effort to create a favorable atmosphere for the upcoming conversation. When they get to the subject, the

the German marshal suggests to the British ambassador that negotiations be initiated between Germany and Great Britain, in which the latter should also co-negotiate for Poland. Henderson remains reserved. He does not believe that Göring's proposal will lead to a solution and therefore does not want to follow it. 376 Göring follows up and presents the Englishman with the decrypted cipher telegram from Beck to Lipski as proof that Germany could hardly come to an arrangement with Poland under the given conditions. Goering cannot suspect that the British government and Kennard on the spot in Warsaw are still reinforcing the Polish blockade attitude. Henderson then agrees to convey the new German proposal to his government. Henderson also tries to raise a concern at the meeting. He asks Marshal Goering to prevent the publication of Hitler's 16 Points over the radio, announced for the same evening. Henderson, according to his argument, fears that this would destroy the last faint hope of German-Polish 375 Dahlems, page 119 376 Henderson, page 275 501 talks coming about. 377 The conversation between the four gentlemen ends shortly before 7:00 p.m. without Göring having achieved anything definitive. Ambassador Henderson's desire to keep Hitler's 16 points secret from the world as long as possible is along the same lines as Duff Cooper's request to the editors of DAILY MAIL and DAILY TELEGRAPH to comment as negatively as possible on Hitler's 16-point proposal. The request is obviously aimed at the war readiness of the people in England, France, and the United States. The restriction of the German demands to what is justified and the proposal to let the affected inhabitants of the corridor themselves vote on whether they belong to Poland or Germany might not be enough for many French, British and Americans to go to war for the Poles because of it. Meanwhile, around 4 p.m., Ambassador Lipski seeks a meeting with Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. He has known for a few

hours that Lipski is neither allowed to negotiate nor to accept the German proposals. At 6:30 p.m., the two men face each other.³⁷⁸ Lipski reads out the Polish statement, which von Ribbentrop already knows from the decoded telegram from Warsaw. The minister then asks if the ambassador is allowed to negotiate. He answers in the negative. The conversation touches on the German-English exchange of views of the last days and Hitler's expectation to see a Polish negotiator in Berlin by the evening of August 30. Then von Ribbentrop asked Ambassador Lipski a second time if he could negotiate. When Lipski answered in the negative, the conversation ended. Neither von Ribbentrop nor Lipski made the slightest attempt to give the other party a way out. Both know that this means war. Thus, at 7 p.m., the last two attempts to prevent the Wehrmacht from launching its attack on September 1 have failed and come to nothing. The effort to begin talks with Poland on Hitler's 16-point proposal failed, and the attempt to negotiate with England instead of Poland came to nothing. Meanwhile, in the Paris Cabinet, battles raged over which direction to take. President Daladier was of the opinion that France must remain intransigent toward Germany.³⁷⁹ Hitler would not survive the start of the war politically in his own country. Foreign Minister Bonnet advises negotiating as quickly as possible with Germany, Italy, England, and Poland on anything that might trigger war.³⁸⁰ And French Ambassador Coulondre in Berlin writes variously by the day, sometimes ³⁷⁷ Henderson, page 275 ³⁷⁸ The following conversation is recorded by the chief interpreter, Dr. Schmidt. See ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 476 ³⁷⁹ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 518 ³⁸⁰ Benoist-Mechin, Volume 7, page 514 ⁵⁰² sharply to Daladier and sometimes moderately to Bonnet. On August 30, for example, to the President: "Dear Mr. President, the trial of strength is

swinging in our favor. I learn from a reliable source that Hitler has been taking a wait-and-see attitude for the past five days, that the party leaders have become vacillating, and that the reports speak of growing discontent among the population. We must still hold firm, hold firm, and hold firm once again. We must convince him by our firm stand that he will get nothing at all by the methods he has used so far...." ³⁸¹ The following day, August 31, Coulondre advises Foreign Minister Bonnet quite differently: ".... According to certain information, the German Government is very annoyed at not having received any reply from Poland. It is to be feared that if it has no answer in its hands by the end of the morning, it will issue orders for an immediate attack.....It would be entirely in the interest of the Polish Government to communicate immediately to Berlin that it approves of the contact and will send Lipski with all necessary ³⁸² instructions as a plenipotentiary to negotiate." ³⁸² As strong as the conflict over direction in the Cabinet, France's external action was weak when it came to solving the problems that had been set up at Versailles by consensus with Poland and the German Reich. An aforementioned mediation attempt by the French and Italians on this day, the last before the war, is hardly worth mentioning. Around noon, Mussolini, probably at the earlier urging of the French, proposes a conference to fundamentally heal the damage of Versailles and all the disputes between Italy, England, France, Poland, and Germany.³⁸³ France's Foreign Minister Bonnet believes that this proposal should first be coordinated between Paris and London before Hitler is invited. Thus, a voting process ensues until late in the evening. The British government considers Mussolini's proposal a trap and advises not to reject it brusquely, but to demand a demobilization of the armies of all countries beforehand.³⁸⁴ At 10 p.m., the French government is ready to inform the British of its decision that it agrees to Mussolini's proposal in case the German-Polish negotiations have failed. London replies that it will send its decision to Rome the next morning. But then the Wehrmacht is already rolling through Poland. Both the British and the French now let it go. ³⁸¹ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 494 ³⁸² Bonnet, p. 281 ³⁸³ Bonnet, pp. 285 f ³⁸⁴ Benoist-Mechin, Vol. 7, p. 513 ⁵⁰³ At 7:00 p.m., the Italian ambassador Dr. Attolico appears for an audience with Hitler and offers him the "Duce's" mediation.³⁸⁵ For Hitler, time is running out. At this late hour, he can no longer stop the advance of the German troops. With each additional day he

is now stalled, the danger increases that the campaign against Poland will be bogged down not in Warsaw but in mud and rain. The generals have advised him not to begin a campaign after September 2. The generals with the British and French know this as well.³⁸⁶ General Gamelin, as mentioned earlier, has reckoned that a German attack would be unsuccessfully bogged down in the fall and winter. Thus, on this evening, Hitler is no longer faced with the choice between negotiation or war, but only between giving up Danzig and protecting the German minority in Poland or going to war. He sees by now that the British will not help him with the Poles, and that the Poles will not negotiate under British protection. Hitler gratefully declines the "Duce's" late offer. A very last opportunity to persuade the Poles, British and French to reconsider their positions is quite obviously deliberately omitted on this day. Roosevelt, who has known for seven days that Hitler has conceded eastern Poland to the Soviet Union as its area of interest, is also now shrouding himself in silence. It will not have been difficult for the President of the USA to imagine that the Polish Government, with this, his knowledge, would have preferred the reincorporation of the Free State of Danzig into the German Reich to the now certain loss of Eastern Poland. It sounds rather macabre, but on the morning of this last day before the war, the American ambassador in Paris Bullitt assures his Polish colleague Count Lukasiewicz that he knows from a reliable source that a possibly existing secret supplementary agreement to the Hitler-Stalin Pact concerns only the three Baltic states, but not Poland.³⁸⁷ Hitler has to admit a great defeat to himself on the eve of the war. His dream of a treaty and partnership with England lies in tatters. For him, it is the Poles whose intransigence blocks the way to the fulfillment of his dream. In his anger at this personal defeat, Hitler stoops to a phrase that seems to prove his belligerence. When the Italian ambassador has left, Hitler turns to Meissner, the secretary of state, who has remained in the room, and says: ³⁸⁵ ADAP, Series D, Volume VII, Document 478 ³⁸⁶ The French foreign minister, Bonnet, and the British foreign minister, Bonnet, are also present. Foreign Minister Bonnet and British Ambassador Henderson write in their memoirs that they knew at the time that Hitler could no longer postpone the Polish campaign for weather reasons. ³⁸⁷ Bavendamm, *Roosevelt's Road to War*, page 604, referring to Polish historian Jędrzejewicz in his book *Lukasiewicz*, page 269 ⁵⁰⁴ "Basically, I am glad that the Poles did not accept my offer. I did it against my inner conviction, but if the Poles had accepted it accepted it, I would have been bound by it." ³⁸⁸ Perhaps Hitler's remark reveals that, after all, he had basically wanted war with Poland for some time. Or perhaps the remark is the protective assertion of a man who has failed at something and then claims that he would not have wanted it any other way. Or perhaps it is the outburst of a meanwhile pent-up rage against Poland's attitude, which has spoiled for him the return of Danzig without bloodshed and a partnership with Great Britain: in other words, war as revenge for a foreign policy defeat of Hitler. At 9 p.m. German radio announces Hitler's 16-point proposal. Between 9 and 10 p.m., Secretary of State von Weizsäcker hands the written copies of Hitler's proposal to the ambassadors of England, France, Japan, and to the *chargés d'affaires* of the United States and the Soviet Union, one after the other. Late in the evening, the British government has to take care of the press once again. The *DAILY TELEGRAPH* reported in its evening edition on the mediation activities of the London government between Warsaw and Berlin. In doing so, the newspaper also mentioned that the Polish Government, after receiving the offer of negotiations from Germany, ordered general mobilization for the armed forces instead of honoring the offer. The evening edition of the *DAILY TELEGRAPH* is confiscated. A reprint, which comes as a late edition, omits mention of the general mobilization in Poland. Nothing in this grave crisis should leave England's readers in any doubt.³⁸⁹ The Outbreak of War At 4:45 a.m. on September 1, 1939, the Wehrmacht launched an attack against Poland without a declaration of war. General Keitel, as head of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht, advises Hitler to declare war on Poland, but the "Führer" refuses.³⁹⁰ Hitler's reasons may have been operational or political. The operational one lies in the surprise of the attacked Poles. But

that counts for little here because the Polish forces were already mobilized and fully deployed when the 388 Benoist-Mechin, vol. 7, page 524, quoting Otto Meißner, Staatssekretär unter Ebert-Hindenburg-Hitler, Hamburg 1950, page 518 there. 389 Hedin, page 60 390 Keitel, page 251 505 war begins. The political one may lie in the experience of World War I. In 1914, after Russia, France and England had previously mobilized their armies and fleets, Germany was the first country to declare war. In Versailles, this was seen, among other things, as proof of Germany's war guilt in the sense of the "polluter pays" principle. In 1919, the defeated German Reich had to pay a high price for this traditional course of action, which was correct under international law. In the 20th century, declarations of war are no longer the general rule. Japan, for example, opened the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 without declaring war on Russia. Poland does the same to the Soviet Union in 1920. The USA enters the Vietnam War without a declaration of war. NATO countries open their air strikes in 1999 against Yugoslavia also without a declaration of war. Hitler also begins the war without a declaration of war after six months of fruitless attempts at talks with the Polish government. On September 3, England and France follow their alliance obligation and in turn declare war on Germany. Almost the entire Commonwealth and some of the French colonies join in on the same day. On September 3, they are Australia, Burma, Ceylon, India, Jordan, Cambodia, Laos, Morocco, New Zealand, Tunisia and Vietnam. The Union of South Africa and Iraq follow on the 6th, and Canada on September 10. Chamberlain thus made good on his promise of a week ago. The war over the city of Danzig and the Corridor has expanded into a world war within two days. From day one, the war in Poland extends to the civilian population in three ways. On the one hand, the Polish population in the combat area is affected by the fighting unexpectedly and without German intention. For example, on the very first day of the war, during a German air raid against a Polish division, bombs were dropped on the town of Wielun due to poor visibility. In the process, about 1,200 innocent Polish civilians are killed.³⁹¹ Second, from the beginning of the war, the Polish population, including some of the military, hunts down Germans still living in Poland. In a wave of house searches, looting, arrests, expulsions, maltreatment, rapes, and murders, more than 5,000 of these Polish citizens with German as their mother tongue also have to give up their lives.³⁹² The largest bloodbath, with about 1,000 murders, takes place ³⁹¹ The death toll of Wielun is taken from a Polish letter to the editor in the FAZ of August 8, 2001. ³⁹² Rasmus, page 144. The figure of over 5,000 dead comes from a graves registration center in Posen. The official 1940 Reich Ministry of the Interior figure gives over 12,000 dead. Details of the Germans murdered and perished beyond that during the dragging marches and the German conscripts killed in the Polish army are documented in the book "Pomerellen-Westpreussen" by Hugo Rasmus. 506 took place on the third day of the war in the city of Bydgoszcz. Thirdly, Polish snipers, especially in the cities, open their partisan fight against German troops immediately after the withdrawal of Polish troops. This leads to reactions. Thus, from the beginning of the war, there are also fierce clashes between the German military and the Polish population. The death of such a large number of victims among the German and Polish civilian population creates once again hatred in both peoples. On September 4, the flame spreads to the West. England's Royal Air Force attacks German ships lying in the roads off Cuxhaven, Wilhelmshaven and Brunsbüttel with 16 bombers.³⁹³ On the 5th, the German U-boat force and the Royal Navy begin their war in the Atlantic. Both sink the first merchant ships of their opponents on this day. On the 6th, the Germans issued an order not to fire on or control French merchant ships.³⁹⁴ The German government was still trying to keep France out of the war. On the 10th, England violates the neutrality of the small country by flying bombers over Belgium, an attempt to draw even this hitherto neutral state into the new war.³⁹⁵ Beginning on September 12, British army troops land on the continent and reinforce the French. In this way, England fulfills its guarantees to Poland without relieving Poland in the slightest. France initially shows loyalty to the alliance and deploys 80 divisions in

the west between Switzerland and the North Sea. At first, only eleven German divisions were opposed to them. On September 6, the Polish daily EXPRESS PORANNY reports that the French army is marching into the Rhineland and that the Polish air force is bombing Berlin.³⁹⁶ Three days later, on the 9th, the Wehrmacht has already taken all of western Poland up to the Narew-Warsaw-Bug River line. On September 13, EXPRESS PORANNY headlines "German ³⁹⁷ Offensive in Poland Collapsed. "397 Again three days later, the DAILY EXPRESS reports from London that Saarlouis is surrounded by French troops, which means nothing since the town is right on the national border. Only the report is not true. On September 17, the Polish government, including President Moscicki and Commander-in-Chief Rydz-Smigly, leaves for Romania, and the Red Army of the Soviet Union, also without a declaration of war, attacks Poland from the east. It reclaims its former territory, awarded to it after World War I by the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victors. The Soviet government explains its actions to foreign governments on the following grounds: ³⁹³ KTB-SKL, page 39 ³⁹⁴ KTB-SKL, page 43 ³⁹⁵ Stegemann, page 17 ³⁹⁶ Piekalkiewicz, page 139 ³⁹⁷ Piekalkiewicz, page 103 507 "The Polish state ceased to exist, and the Soviet Union therefore had to take under its protection the Ukrainians and White Russians ³⁹⁸ living on Polish territory." ³⁹⁸ Map 36: Poland's Situation on the Evening of September 18, 1939 The following day, on the 18th, the Wehrmacht captured all of Poland west of the Curzon Line except for the capital, Warsaw. On September 19, the French and British governments responded to the Soviets' involvement in the war by urging the Russian government to withdraw its troops from Poland again ³⁹⁸ Piekalkiewicz, Page 180 508. If they failed to do so, Paris and London threatened, a declaration of war would automatically follow.³⁹⁹ That was that. Four weeks later, the British and French secretly contacted the Russians to invite them to war against Germany. On September 29, the capital Warsaw falls. Poland has lost. Paris and London neither took serious military action against Germany nor declared war on the Soviet Union during the four weeks of the conquest of Poland by the German Wehrmacht and the Soviet Red Army. ³⁹⁹ Piekalkiewicz, page 192 509 510 PART 6 FINAL CONSIDERATION England's Contribution to the Outbreak of War France's Contribution to the Outbreak of War Poland's Contribution to the Outbreak of War The Soviet Union's Contribution to the Outbreak of War The United States' Contribution to the Outbreak of War Germany's Contribution to the Outbreak of War Balance 511 512 FINAL CONSIDERATION The reasons leading to World War II lie one upon the other like painted panes of glass. Quite clearly one sees

only the colorful picture on the uppermost, most recently placed glass. The picture on the next, lower pane is still recognizable, but already considerably duller. The images on the lower, older glass plates shimmer through only very faintly, but their colors and contours are still part of what one sees from above. Thus the surface picture shows that in 1939 - Germany invades Poland, - Russia steals half of Poland, - Poland is only the victim, - France and England help the oppressed Poland - and the United States of America last but not least support and save the helpers. But already the picture below shows the dispute about Danzig, about the corridor passage and about the fate of the harassed minorities in the new state of Poland. It shows how the Americans, the British and the French created this problem in Versailles and accepted the resulting danger of war. It shows the Poles who, as the heirs of the problem, are using their national pride to prevent the dispute from being settled in agreement and peace with the German Reich. And it shows a Germany that seeks this agreement and does not achieve it, and in the end opens the war. From the lower layers shine through the many and long lives of all those peoples who clashed in 1939 and afterwards in the Second World War. Just as Asher ben Nathan says, "What matters is what preceded the first shots," what matters here is which people and which politician contributed to the causes of World War II before the war broke out and into history that still reverberates. Every nation and every politician who caused something here bears its share of the blame

for World War II. A key role in World War I and in World War II on the opposite side of Germany is played by Great Britain and France. 513 England's Contribution to the Outbreak of War England's security and wealth have rested for more than three centuries on securing its food, raw material, and financial needs from distant colonies and trade between them, and on using the people and troops from the colonies for its own benefit when needed. In order to protect security and this wealth preemptively, English governments have always opposed any foreign power even when they suspect that the foreign power is becoming a competitor and a danger to England on the sea and in Europe. After France was eliminated as a rival by Great Britain in 1898, and Russia was beaten out of the field by Japan in 1905, Imperial Germany, with its economic miracle, its naval construction program and its first colonies, is now moving into a position that is considered dangerous in England. Although Germany demands nothing from England, neither land nor people, its own rise earns it the antagonism of the British. From the boycott of the "Made in Germany" of 1887 to the mobilization of the British fleet because of a single small German warship that was anchored in Agadir in 1911 and "showed the flag," to the closing of ranks with France against Germany, England's preventive defensive stance is consistent. But in 1914, this preemptive posture tempts England to seize the opportunity to go to war with Germany. The German request to Britain and France to keep the peace in the event of a war in the East between Serbs, Russians, Habsburgs and Germans in the West is rejected by Britain as well as by France. Even the offer to spare Belgium cannot persuade England to stay out of the war. The First World War that follows initially brings England rich pickings. It acquires control of Germany's colonies and the German oil concessions in Iraq. The German fleet is crushed. The German Reich has to pay reparations to the victorious states for 92 years and Germany's strength is broken for a long time. The British accompaniment is as bitter for the Germans as the defeat in World War I itself. Britain, in the Council of the Victorious States, like all its Allies, maintains that Austria and Germany alone caused the past war. It accuses the Germans of being incapable of administering colonies. It pretends to have fought the war for democracy, human rights, and the right of peoples to self-determination, and it, together with the other victors, enforces that Germany and Austria withdraw their 1 In July 1898, England threatens France with war and forces it to withdraw a military and research expedition from Fashoda in the Sudan. 2 In 1905, Russia loses a war against Japan with the naval battle of Tsushima. 514 Abolish monarchies. This package of accusations and claims solidified the stereotype among many Germans that the British were perfidious and mendacious. Finally, in 1919, while British politicians were accusing the Germans of incompetence in colonial rule, British soldiers were gunning down Indian protesters in Amritsar. This particular "capacity" of the British for colonial rule costs 450 Indians their lives in one day³. England's claim to represent the right of self-determination of peoples finds its obvious refutation in Ireland, Kenya, Egypt, India, Burma and elsewhere on this earth. And England's declaration to fight for democracy

and its demand to depose the German emperor and princes seems absurd for a country that introduces "equal" suffrage barely 50 years after the German Empire and that allows itself to be ruled by princes, dukes and kings. Thus, after the First World War, "the English" are not seen in Germany as fair, just and peace-loving, as they themselves would like to be seen. Immediately with the "peace treaty" of 1919, England makes its first disastrous contribution to the fact that peace will soon be followed by the next war. The British government, in conjunction with the other Allied victors, constructed a new version of its balance of power for Europe, based on a permanent conflict between Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. The Versailles incorporation of the settlement area of nearly five million Germans into the newly created states of the Poles and the Czechs and Slovaks and the Danzig-Pomerania construction are designed to keep the Germans, the Czechs and the Poles "busy with each other" and at odds. Especially Danzig as a child of three divorced parents, Germany, Poland and the

League of Nations had to lead to conflicts and changes at some point. New wars are foreseeable with it since Versailles. This was also recognized in England. The British governments since 1920 have accepted this danger of war as a concomitant of their balance of power, if not even consciously preserved it. The postwar period followed, in which England's foreign policy shifted from land reclamation to conservation. Securing the gains of conquest is only possible if status quo preservation is now recognized under international law and conquests, such as the British ones of the last twenty years in Sudan, Oranje and the Transvaal⁴, are internationally outlawed in the future. Consequently, England henceforth advocates peace in the world, even if it continues to intervene militarily here and there in China, Russia and Egypt in the 1920s. With its policy of the status quo, however, England fails to eliminate the disruptive factors created in Versailles and Saint-Germain itself. ³ Cultural Timetable, page 1036 ⁴ Oranje and Transvaal are today parts of the Republic of South Africa. ⁵¹⁵. Thus the British let the Memel question slide, the Danzig corridor problem persist and the armament questions remain unresolved. They ignored the needs of the minorities in Poland, France and Czechoslovakia. They do not take note of Austria's will to join, and they tolerate France's claim that Germany's border there will remain permanently unprotected. When Germany, under Hitler, began to solve the enumerated questions itself one after the other from 1936 on, Europe almost came to the brink of war each time, and England lost self-respect and face bit by bit. As early as 1933, people in England began to call Germany an aggressor and a disturber of the peace. Until 1936, this is true only to the extent that the German Reich disturbs this kind of British status quo notion. At the time, Germany demands nothing from England or France. The British peace of keeping the winners is not touched at first. England's contribution to the permanent threat of war from 1936 onward is that it does not remove the disruptive factors of Versailles that it helped to create, as long as this could be done in peace. England's next contribution is its naval buildup. Instead of reducing its armed forces, including its fleet, to the "minimum consistent with national security" as stipulated in the treaty, the kingdom is participating in the arms race between the United States and Japan. This in turn spills over to the land and air forces of other countries. All in all, Great Britain, together with Germany's neighboring countries, provides the German Reich, which was unprotected until 1936, with the level of armaments to which the Reichswehr must be upgraded in order to be able to defend Germany if necessary. The level of the other states, however, is so high that Germany itself becomes capable of attacking individual neighboring countries. In the Sudeten crisis, England for the first time made a serious effort to pay off a piece of the Versailles

damage itself. Hitler, who obviously wanted more than just to bring the Sudeten Germans home, did not thank England for this help at the Munich conference. Later, it became clear that the dictator intended to annex the whole of the Czech Republic to the German Reich. But even before Hitler commits his crime against the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939, England begins to prepare for war with Germany. It doubles its defense budget for armaments, introduces the "Immediate Reserve" for the fleet⁵ and a "Voluntary National Service for the Defense of England," and imposes loans on the Soviet Union for its arms purchases. In March 1939, the dictator Hitler has Czechia occupied, and Hungary annexes Carpatho-Ukraine at the same time. Now England would have had a reason to defend the freedom of the Czechs and Ruthenians and to go to war with the German Reich and Hungary. But both are omitted. Thus, there is again a duty of peace between Great Britain and Germany, unless ⁵ This regulation allows the conscription of reservists before the official mobilization. ⁵¹⁶ unless England had later attempted to liberate the Czechs and Ruthenians. There was never any such intention. In the meantime, however, England's political elite has grown tired of the new German Reich government eliminating the consequences of Versailles piece by piece, without the English government being able to exert any significant influence. With the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, Hitler went too far.

London is no longer prepared to give in to further German wishes, even if they are justified. Rather, the next wish should be the occasion to put an end to the German rise to power. Shortly after the German invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia, England starts to initiate the next world war. Since Hitler has renounced Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol in treaties with France and Italy, all that remains as the last legacies of Versailles are Danzig, the Corridor Passage, the lot of the German minority in Poland, and the colonies. Thus Ambassador Phipps wrote in his final report before returning home to London from the embassy in Berlin in 1937: "Hitler wants Austria, then the Sudeten, then Memel, the corridor, Danzig, and finally the lost colonies." ⁶ His successor in Berlin, Henderson, shared this view of things. Too often Hitler broached the colonial question with Chamberlain, with Halifax, and with himself. Thus it is important for London that revisions of the facts created at Versailles be stopped before England's war gains are in place. And before the later negotiations over the former German colonies, only Danzig is on the agenda. With the Czech conquest, it is Hitler himself who puts the brakes on the British to bring him to a halt. And England pulls the brake. The British government builds a logic that everyone understands, and that turns the gaze from the colonial problem in another direction. England is accusing Germany of seeking a world empire in Eastern Europe instead of annexation of the imperial territories seceded in 1919. This is true in so far as this is the still secret intention of Hitler. It is not true insofar as this is far from the German people and their Wehrmacht. But the Czech invasion, the German economic influence in southeastern Europe, and the German-Polish negotiations over Danzig and the Corridor all point eastward. England takes advantage of the situation thus created to build an obstacle for Germany at the Danzig problem, where it must stop or jump. The English government offers the Polish a guarantee against Germany, although Germany does not threaten Poland at that time and although England is unable to protect Poland in case of emergency. At the time, the German government was negotiating with the Polish government for the return of Danzig and the construction of extraterritorial communications between East Prussia and the Reich. In return, it offered recognition of Poland's 1919 territorial gains in West Prussia and in Posen and preservation of Polish economic and port privileges in Danzig. Poland, which had been struggling for two decades for recognition of the territorial gains, could well have come to a trade agreement with Germany. But with the two guarantees and promises of aid of March 31, 1939, and August 25, London has deprived Warsaw of virtually any reason to respond positively to Berlin's wishes. Thus, in the end, Hitler no longer had the choice between a negotiated solution or war, but only the fatal one between renunciation and war. Moreover, the British promise "to give without delay every support and aid within their power" ⁷ gave the Polish government and the Polish public a certainty of victory that tempted them to prefer war to compromise. The guarantees were supposed to slow Hitler down; instead, they mobilized the Poles. That London is concerned neither with the independence of the Czechs or Poles, nor with human rights and peace, nor with the freedom of small peoples, is shown by England's other behavior. Parallel to the German atrocity against the Czechs, Hungary conquers Carpatho-Ukraine. At the same time, Poland marches against Lithuania and threatens war to force retrospective recognition of Poland's 1921 conquest of Wilna. Neither stirs the British. Then England negotiates with the Soviets for an alliance to participate in the war against Germany, granting the Russians the right to intervene in the three small Baltic states. The freedom of small nations is not so important to the British either. The reference to the fact that the Baltic states had been part of the Tsarist Empire for two centuries seems pale in comparison with the thousand years that the Czech Republic had been part of the German Empire. In addition, in attempting

to enter into an alliance with the Soviets, England has chosen a totalitarian partner who, with the persecution of non-Communists, the expropriation and expulsion of its peasants, and the "purges" in the party and military, already has millions of dead Russians to its credit. If England had wanted to fight for

the enforcement of human rights in other countries, it certainly would not have sought the help of the totalitarian Moscow regime to do so. The move with the Poles is against Germany alone, and it is not about noble motives. The last and most direct contribution of England to the outbreak of this war is the double game which the British government in the end plays with the German Reich. Formulation from Art 1 of the British-Polish Pact of March 25, 1939. In the last week before the war begins, British Prime Minister Chamberlain and his Foreign Secretary Halifax give Adolf Hitler the impression that they are interested in a British-German alliance, which in reality they are not, and that they want to play the fair broker between Poland and Germany. At the same time Minister Halifax sent word to Ambassador Kennard in Warsaw that all that was required of the Poles was talks, not concessions. Even when passing on the place and date of negotiations, the British let the Germans believe that they had recommended the German conditions to the Poles. In Warsaw, however, they did not advise the Germans to accept them. In Berlin, they only announce this after the waiting period has elapsed. The whole thing is a double game on the part of the British government. On the one hand, it makes Hitler believe that it, too, would be interested in a German-British alliance, and that it could mediate fairly with the Poles. The British government thus builds up the appearance that it is fighting for peace. On the other hand, it creates the scenario on which the next war will break out of the German-Polish dispute. With its guarantees, it first deprives the Polish government of any incentive to negotiate. Then it makes it clear to it that it does not have to accommodate the German one, and finally it treats the mediation in such a delaying manner that the beginning of the German-Polish talks demanded by Hitler falls through. Even if the British justify their behavior in 1939 by saying that they wanted to prevent negotiations under the pressure of the German Reich government, as they had done before in the case of the Czechs, the result is that they also thwarted a German-Polish understanding, first in the beginning and later in the crisis. The British know that in 1939 Hitler was faced with the choice between renunciation, a negotiated settlement, or war. They also know that, in view of his responsibility for the "separated" Germans, in view of the increasingly precarious situation of the German minority in Poland, and in view of the pressing demand of the Danzigers for annexation to their homeland, he is virtually unable to renounce. The German Reich is under the same moral pressure in this respect as the NATO states were in 1999 in view of the situation of the hard-pressed Kosovars in Yugoslavia. The British can be sure that Hitler will not blow to retreat under these circumstances, and that he will not renounce. Thus they obstruct the way of negotiation, which they could still have opened with the Poles. In doing so, they play for time at five to twelve until Hitler acts and opens the war. England, together with France, created the German-Polish problem and prevented it from being settled without war in 1939. The British government has understood it with skill to play the role of mediator.

role of mediator and to urge peace on all sides. Thus it can enter the war "with a clean slate" before Germany's fleet continues to grow, before the German Reich becomes the strongest power in Europe, and before the former 519 German colonies come on the agenda. On September 3, 1939, Great Britain declares war on the German Reich. After World War I, the TIMES in 1919 reads, "If Germany begins to trade again in the next 50 years, this war will have been fought for nothing." After World War II, the SUNDAY CORRESPONDENT writes in its September 16, 1949 issue, "We did not enter the war in 1939 to save Germany from Hitler, or the Jews from Auschwitz, or the continent from fascism. As in 1914, we entered the war for the no less noble reason that we could not accept German supremacy in Europe." France's Contribution to the Outbreak of War Since the days of King Louis XIII and his first minister, Cardinal Richelieu, beginning with the conquest of Lorraine in 1633, it has been the aim of all French governments to push France's eastern frontier toward the Rhine. And this urge towards the East has by no means been fulfilled with the annexation of Lorraine and Alsace. When Germany

reconquered the two provinces in 1871 for almost half a century, the French were not only left with the will to take back both parts of the country when the opportunity arose. The desire for further German territories on the left bank of the Rhine was not satisfied. In 1917, while the war was still in progress, the French government had the German Saar region awarded to it by the Russians in a secret treaty. In the Versailles negotiations, France then tries to annex the Saarland and Luxembourg and to separate the German lands on both sides of the Rhine from the German Reich as a separate "Rhine state". All this fails only because of the objection of other victorious powers. Even after the "peace treaty" of Versailles, France does not make a real peace with its neighbor Germany. The so-called peace ostracizes Germany, lets it bleed unusually hard and denies it its ability to protect itself in the long run. As long as the defeated Germany could have used France's hand and help after the First World War, the French remain irreconcilable. After the first war, the French, together with the other victors, create the problems on which a next war must ignite. They demand the right of self-determination for minorities and divide the defeated states for this purpose. Then they immediately and against all self-imposed rules create new minorities, which they incorporate into newly created states against their will. 520 Thus Poland and the two Versailles creatures Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, which in the meantime have disintegrated again, are nothing else than distorted images of the multi-ethnic states that have just perished. France is also one of the fathers of the League of Nations mandates Memelland and Danzig. With each of these League of Nations constructs, the French secure for themselves an influence and a right of presence in the Baltic Sea, in which, as a non-bordering state, they otherwise have no natural interests to represent. France creates the majority of all reasons for the Second World War in 1919, even if in 1939 it is Germany that takes one of these reasons as a reason for opening war. The contribution to the outbreak of war in 1939 that France makes between the two wars is similar to that of the British. But France takes a massive approach from the outset. While the British allow their seeds of Versailles to ripen for nearly two decades without further action, France seeks to undermine Germany's sovereignty and external security in four ways. First, in violation of their disarmament obligations, the French maintain multiple military superiority over their German neighbors for a good decade and a half. Second, the French governments successfully blocked the Geneva disarmament negotiations from 1927 to 1933, thus preventing Germany from becoming self-protective again. Third, France repeatedly exploits Germany's weakness and allows its troops to march into the German Reich despite the peace that has been concluded. And fourth, within a few years France erects a wall of anti-German military treaties around the German Reich. France succeeds in encircling not only Germany and Austria with this wall of treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Belgium⁸. It also assembles an alliance 12 times superior to Germany in peacetime strength and about 100 times superior in war, so that Hitler and the Reichswehr will have to take their cue from 1935 in building a new Wehrmacht. France failed to reduce the threat level around Germany during the years Hitler offered to limit German armaments. Moreover, France builds its security on military alliances without taking into account that one day it will have to "pay back security". And it is getting involved in all the dealings of its allies. France's security efforts after the First World War consisted, in sum, of keeping Germany down and not of comparing itself with the Germans. When Hitler declares the rest of disintegrating Czechoslovakia a protectorate in March 1939, against international law and his own promises, France seizes the opportunity to prevent further revisions of the Treaty of Versailles to 8 French treaties in 1919 with GB, 1920 with B, 1921 with P, 1924 with CSR, 1926 with RUM, 1927 with JUG, and 1932 with SU ⁵²¹. Poland suddenly rises from the ostracism of England because of Teschen to its alliance partner and France thus finds a new partner it can activate against Germany. The French, who themselves helped to cause the Polish-German dispute over Danzig at Versailles, do not use their alliance influence on the Poles in the slightest way to try to find a peace solution. They do not

even attempt to mediate between the two adversaries or to tackle the problems themselves. France wants to defeat Germany in a new war because of its resurgence and because of the Czech occupation. It therefore encourages the Polish government to stand firm against the German demands and, if necessary, to risk a war over Danzig at a time when the German Reich government is still trying to avoid a warlike confrontation with the Poles. In May 1939, General Gamelin, the French commander-in-chief, promised Polish War Minister Kasprzycki that France would join Poland in a campaign against Germany. The French Prime Minister Daladier and his Foreign Minister Bonnet know that Gamelin has made this promise and does not intend to keep it even if necessary. They let the Poles in the false belief that they can win together with France against Germany. In May 1939, the German Reich government's negotiating proposals concerning Danzig and the transit routes are still so modest that Poland could have had peace without any territorial losses of her own. It is France which, at this fork in the road in May 39, advises the Polish government not to normalize, not to negotiate, and not to make peace at what is as yet a minimal price, but which tempts Poland with false promises to take the road to war. The French promise to attack Germany in the event of a Danzig dispute therefore weighs more heavily than the British guarantee, because in 1939 only the French had an army capable of attacking Germany directly and immediately. The British, with their fleet and air force, as the Poles know, could help only indirectly and in a war of long duration. Poland, however, can win a war only with direct and quick help and, if it comes badly, survive it. Thus, it is mainly the French government that lures Poland into the war with the promise of a two-front war against Germany. With such "good prospects," the Polish government also has little incentive to negotiate for a new Danzig status and for extraterritorial German transit routes. France also shows little other inclination to give peace a chance in 1939. Even shortly before the fateful Gamelin promise of May 17 to Kasprzycki, Pope Pius XII attempted to settle or defuse the conflicts through negotiations among the major states in Europe at a five-power conference. France's Prime Minister Daladier reportedly declines to participate in such negotiations. In the early summer of 1939, the French are more concerned with arranging a Franco-British-Polish-Soviet coalition for war against the German Reich. With minimal effort of its own, France hopes to defeat Germany with the strength of its assembled allies. It is also endeavoring to lower the threshold of a new world war to the point where it also becomes probable. Thus, on July 1, 39, the French Foreign Minister Bonnet informs the German Reich government in a note that even a German attempt to change the status quo of Danzig will lead to war with Germany⁹. Already an attempt! Even when Hitler lifts the attack orders for the Wehrmacht on August 24 and again at 5 to 12 on August 30, showing that he wants only Danzig and not Poland, France encourages Poland, to say no to the proposed moderate Danzig settlement, knowing full well that this meant war. French efforts to solve the problem of the Free State of Danzig, created at Versailles itself, by consensus with the parties involved, fail to materialize. Apart from many assurances of its own desire for peace, France contributes nothing to peace. President Daladier is as ready for war in 1939 as Hitler. The one does not shy away from war if it means he can downgrade Germany back to Versailles level. The other does not shy away from war if he can thereby eliminate the last disruptive factors of Versailles, the separation of Danzig and East Prussia from the German Reich. On September 3, 1939, France declares war on the German Reich. Poland's contribution to the outbreak of war Poland is not only the punished heir of a burden taken over in Versailles with a large number of ethnic minorities and many dictated border problems. Poland, although on the face of it stands as the first victim of the Second World War, on closer examination is also one of the first perpetrators. Poland, reborn in 1918, managed to start quarrels and wars with almost all its neighbors in the first four years of its new existence. In 1918, even before the Versailles border decisions, Poland took advantage of the armistice between the victorious states and the German Reich and took possession of the hitherto German provinces of Posen and West Prussia.

The latter, however, is not predominantly Polish, and the annexation of the north of the province separates the German part of East Prussia from the rest of the Deut 9 Paul Karl Schmidt, Page 74 523 schen Reich. The so-called corridor was created. Even though the victors later concede this piece of land to the Poles, it is Poland that first creates the facts, that then prevents a referendum in the disputed land, and that in 1939 rejects a moderate solution for the transport connection of East Prussia to the Reich as unreasonable. The corridor problem, created and maintained by Poland, becomes Poland's undoing in 1939. The same style includes Polish attempts from 1919 to 1921 to thwart a plebiscite in Upper Silesia, and when that does not work, to conquer German Upper Silesia. The behavior of the Poles in the Upper Silesia dispute contributes not insignificantly to the fact that a large part of all Germans accepts Hitler's opening of the war in 1939 as right and proper, even if they do not want to wage this war with Poland in and of itself. In 1920 the wars against the Soviet Union and Lithuania follow. Poland disregards the Polish-Soviet border demarcation of the "Supreme Allied Council" of the victors and annexes a country in which White Russians and Ukrainians live in the majority. With this breach of law Poland creates two further problems for itself: the permanent hostility of the Soviet Union and strong minorities, which it does not integrate until 1939. Poland pays for the attack against Russia of 1920 with the invasion of the Red Army in September 1939. Also in 1920, Poland annexes the capital Vilnius in Lithuania and an area around it. This would probably have few consequences in 1939 if Poland had left Lithuania alone after the conquest. But in 1938 Poland again marches troops on the Lithuanian border and demands recognition under international law of its 1920 annexation. The Polish government threatens the Lithuanian with war if it refuses to recognize the conquest. Something similar happens to the Czechs in 1938. Polish forces march on the Czech border at Teschen. The Polish government demands the cession of the Teschen territory and threatens war in case of refusal. With its repeated threats and war marches, Poland not only breaks the Kellogg Pact prohibiting it each time. It also loses its moral right to better treatment. Marshal Pilsudski's 1933 attempt to persuade France to wage a war of aggression against Germany also belongs to the style of the Poles of that time to make active foreign policy with wars. Thus, apart from the Latvians and Romanians, the Polish people in 1939 did not border on any neighboring nation that would have had any qualms about paying back the Poles in kind. What could have saved Poland in 1939, however, was a network of bilateral and collective protection treaties. But the Poles also cover this roof themselves. The Kellogg Pact is broken so often that it no longer secures Poland in 1939. With the Teschen conquest of 1938, Poland loses the protection of the Litwi-now Protocol of 1929 and the Polish-Soviet Nonaggression Pact 524 of 1932. With its March 1939 mobilization against Germany in violation of the treaty in direct response to a German offer to negotiate, the Polish government induces Adolf Hitler to terminate the German-Polish Friendship and Nonaggression Pact of 1934. Even though this decision by Hitler is controversial under international law and is considered excessive, it is triggered by Poland itself. Thus, until the outbreak of war, Poland creates around itself a treaty-free space in which only the rules of the strongest apply, as Poland has applied them to almost all neighboring states since 1918. In this situation, so unfavorable for Poland, it contributes to two conflicts that finally trigger the Second World War: the Gdansk question and the minority question. The people of Gdansk demanded annexation to their motherland within the framework of the right of self-determination of peoples, and all German post-war governments demanded the annexation of Gdansk to the territory of the Reich. Poland is involved in this insofar as it has held limited postal, traffic, port, shipping, military and customs rights in the city since 1920. In addition, Poland is assigned diplomatic representation of the Free State of Danzig. In 1939, Germany offers Poland the preservation and retention of Polish port, traffic and shipping rights in the event of Gdansk's annexation to the German Reich. Poland, for its part, offers Gdansk the return of diplomatic foreign representation rights to the Gdansk Senate. Thus, in the event of Danzig's annexation to the

Reich, the State of Poland would only forfeit its postal and customs rights and an ammunition depot on Danzig's Westerplatte. This is the real value of the dispute leading to the world war. But the political value of the dispute has a completely different dimension. The old Hanseatic city with 97% German population is freighted with its own desires and historical memories for the Poles. Marshal Rydz-Smigly sums it up in an official communique on July 20, 1939: "An occupation of Danzig by Germany would be an act reminding us of the partition of Poland." 10 Thus, on that March 26, 1939, when Ambassador Lipski delivers the rejection of the German proposals and wishes from Warsaw, comes the statement so fateful for Poland, in which Lipski threatens, "I have the unpleasant duty to point out that any further pursuit of these German plans, especially in so far as they would concern the return of Danzig to the Reich, would mean war with Poland." 11 The Polish government declares here and several

times later that Poland will go to war with Germany if Danzig is annexed. It creates the occasion for war by declaring a local problem, not worthy of war, in which not even Polish territory is involved, to be the cause of war. Without this premature declaration of war, the Danzig question would have led to far lower 10 Documents Brit. Foreign Policy, Third Series, Volume VI, Document 368 11 IMT Documents, Volume XLI, Document 208 525 costs. Poland demands war as a price for Danzig beginning in March 1939. This is Poland's first major contribution to the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939. Poland's second major contribution to the outbreak of war has long been inherent in its treatment of its national minorities. In spite of all the treaties for the protection of minorities, which are concluded, terminated, and mostly disregarded, the lot of the Germans, White Russians, and Ukrainians in Poland is so hard that the home states of these minorities have almost always had cause to intervene to protect those oppressed in Poland. From May 1939 on, the persecution and harassment of the minorities increased again in such a way that a new treaty securing the human and civil rights of the German-speaking citizens of Poland could not be postponed. Thus, the German-Polish minority question finally overlapped the Danzig corridor problem and gave it its own dangerous dynamic. Hitler thus came under a time pressure that would not have arisen with Danzig and the corridor alone.

Poland's way of dealing with its 10 million citizens of foreign mother tongue is the accelerant to the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939. The Soviet Union's Contribution to the Outbreak of War Soviet Russia's foreign policy after World War I obviously has at least three roots, and these are, first, strategic traditions as a legacy from the tsarist era, second, a world missionary will as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, and third, the urge to restore Russia's old greatness as a result of the lost World War I. The last root is the first one, which is the one of the Soviet Union. The last root is the first to become visible. Russia suffered many land losses at the end of the lost war, similar to Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Finland, the three Baltic republics and large parts of Belarus and Ukraine become sovereign states or Polish territories. Thus, the new Soviet Union has an inherent drive to reappropriate territories that were under Russia's crown in the old tsarist empire.

This is the reason why in 1939 the Soviet Union successfully tried to regain "Eastern Poland" either indirectly through a war alliance with Great Britain and France, or directly with the help of Germany. The Finns, the Balts and the Bessarabians also become "Russian" again in 1940 with the indirect help of Germany. The root that becomes externally recognizable as the second is the statist idea of the Soviet Union, Bolshevism or Communism. This class ideology is conceived in Soviet Russia as a liberation doctrine for oppressed social classes and for colonial peoples. From this doctrine emanates a missionary duty to the exploited people in the capitalist states and in the colonies. With the idea of the "final victory of socialism over capitalism" through a "revolution on a world scale", Lenin set a foreign policy goal for this missionary urge, which has a great explosive power. This goal threatens societies and states with other world views. However, the conflict material "ideology" becomes a direct threat to capitalist states and colonial powers only after the Second World War. Before the war, the difference in world

views only divided the Soviet Union and Germany from 1933 on. Hitler's National Socialism as a competing model to communism had a more aggressive effect on Soviet Bolshevism than the rather indifferent ideas of life and society in the other capitalist states until then. Thus, the German Reich and the Soviet Union have lived in constant latent antagonism since 1933, although without this triggering the Second World War. However, the opposition between capitalism and communism contributes to the outbreak of war in an indirect way. In 1939 Stalin is ready to participate in a war to regain "Eastern Poland". That is the surface. Underneath, as a second layer, lies his will to use a new war in Europe to change societies in the capitalist states through the misery and consequences of war and to make them more receptive to the idea of communism. Stalin's two goals in 1939 are, in the short term, "Eastern Poland" and, in the long term, the spread of communism in Western Europe. Thus, he first backs the "horse" of the British and French, who need his arms assistance. He baits both with the offer of 120 divisions for another war with Germany. He confirms them that instead of returning Danzig to the German Reich, he would rather dare to go to war. When Poland wrecks this kind of wartime alliance, and when it becomes apparent that the British and French want to give the Soviets the brunt of this war, Stalin backs the Germans' "horse." He assures Hitler of freedom of action, has the reconquest of the lost peripheral areas of the old tsarist empire approved, even if only in code, in the Secret Additional Protocol, and then seizes "eastern Poland" without any sacrifices of his own. But Stalin's calculation does not work out completely at first. The German campaign against Poland ends too quickly, and the hoped-for war of exhaustion of the capitalist states Germany against France -England does not take place in 1939. Thus, at the end of the conflict over Poland, neither the people in the capitalist states are ripe for a Bolshevik revolution, nor can the Soviet Union, as Lenin had foreseen, as the last strong great power in Europe, "grab the capitalist states by the throat", to stay with Lenin's image. For this, the Soviet Union must once again change sides and bleed terribly itself. 527 The third root mentioned earlier is Russia's strategic tradition. Peter the Great began by building Russia into a naval power. For more than a century, the tsarist empire's expansionist interests have clashed with those of the Japanese in the Far East, the British in the Middle East, and the Ottomans at the mouth of the Black Sea. The urge to expand and to trade on the seas has a long tradition in Russia. In addition, there is now the will to gain political influence on the masses in the colonies of foreign states. Trade, the development of power and the "missionary urge" need open access to the seas and a fleet to go with it. Thus, in 1935, Stalin began to rebuild the Soviet Union into a first-rate naval power with a large navy. Access to the Atlantic in Europe was provided by the ice-free ports of Finland and the Baltic states. So it is in the tradition of the Russians' strategy and in the logic of their naval policy that they need their own Baltic ports. Thus Stalin must see to it that the postwar territorial order in Europe undergoes a change. To do this, he needs the approval or paralysis of the major states in Europe, and he buys this with promises of alliances with the British and French and then with the Germans. In the negotiations with the British and the French, Stalin had also secured the rights of intervention against Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania in return for his arms aid against Germany. Stalin wants to achieve the territorial gains sought for Soviet Russia in the shadow of a war that the British, Germans and French are waging with each other. For this purpose, the dispute over Danzig and the German minority in Poland comes just in time. Stalin keeps his thoughts for a Secret Additional Protocol to secure "eastern Poland" and the Baltic states for him secret from Hitler and von Ribbentrop until they have to sign the deal with their backs against the wall or give way to the Poles. The Soviet leadership never once tries to mediate in the differences between the Germans and the Poles and thus give peace a chance. From the outset, Stalin relies on a war that he assumes will change the territorial order of Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union's advantage. The U.S. Contribution to the Outbreak of War The great power that did not yet intervene directly in the war in 1939 must not be omitted here. The United States of America bears its share of the

blame for the Versailles disaster and for the failure to settle the Danzig Corridor problem peacefully before it becomes the cause of a new world war. But underneath this Danzig and Versailles question lies another reason that drives the U.S. to collisions with foreign states. It is the North Americans' ambition for the expansion of their power and their values. Begun with the expansion across the North American continent, continued with the claim to rule over both Americas in the Monroe Doctrine, continued with the "liberation conquest" of the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific, and the support of the British and French in World War I, this expansion culminates in a second great war to rid the world of the "disease of the three rogue states," Germany, Italy, and Japan. One side of this action is the crusade to protect the threatened; the other is the expansion of power, market, and morality, the latter of which, from the perspective of non-Americans, is primarily their worldview. Thus, Americans protect first their settlers, then the countries of South America, and then the states of Western Europe and the Pacific. North America always feels on the side of the threatened and the right. As by-products remain first a conquered continent, then the domination of South America and the possession of the former Spanish colonies, and after 1919 as the last step on this path the economic penetration of Europe and China by the USA. America, which enters World War I heavily in debt, stands after

the war as the world's largest creditor state. It is not possible to tell whether moral ambition drove the expansion of power here, or whether the ambition for power misused morality as a label, or whether the two were combined in a profitable way in the USA. At the beginning of World War I, the United States and Germany face each other without dispute or tension. From 1914 to 1916, America is in armed conflict only with its neighbor Mexico. Before his re-election as president, Wilson promises the people of his country to keep the U.S. out of the distant war overseas. But America supplies Germany's enemies with food, raw materials, munitions, and weapons by sea, and Germany attempts to cut off supplies to its enemies by sea with unrestricted submarine warfare beginning in February 1917. When, also in February 1917, Imperial Russia sinks in revolution and fails as an eastern front against Germany, the war of the Europeans suddenly becomes a risk to the state and economy in the United States. If Germany were to prevail over her remaining adversaries, all outstanding debts and loans in France and in England would be lost business, and the United States would be even poorer after the War of the Europeans than before. The danger that Russia's defeat posed to the U.S. economy, the unlimited submarine warfare in the Atlantic, and an offer of support from the Germans to the Mexicans that was initially secret but then became known led Wilson to declare war on the German Empire on April 2, 1917, and shortly thereafter on Austria-Hungary as well. 529 Now, suddenly, the industrial power of the U.S., with its masses of people and large war and merchant fleet, was on the side of the British and French. The three powers mentioned above defeat Germany, Austria and Hungary within two years. The two threads running from here to the next war are the change in the image of Germany in the U.S. and the

damage left by Wilson's five notes and his 14 points for the Germans after defeat in 1919. No sooner does America enter the war in 1917 than the president and the political elite and press in the States begin to morally upgrade themselves and devalue Germany. In America, instead of honestly acknowledging their own advantage, they speak of the human values that must now be protected and that "the world must be made safer for democracy." Germany's submarine war becomes a "war against all nations" and the "authoritarian government in Germany" a "challenge to all mankind." The German front-line soldiers soon become "brutal and blood-soaked Huns and vandals" in the consciousness of the American public. The hatred and delusion Americans used as a stimulant in World War I remains alive in many minds after the war. Between the two wars, the U.S. governments do nothing to reduce the anti-German sentiment they fueled in World War I. The "haters" cliché remains alive in the minds of many after the war. The clichés of the "Huns" live on in the media and in the movies. Thus, the image of

Germany is shaped when, 14 years after World War I, a new German imperial government prepares to revoke the Versailles postwar order. Very soon after Hitler's inauguration, the Roosevelt administration reacts against Germany with a sharpness that is extremely unusual between sovereign states living in a state of mutual peace. In historiography, Roosevelt's reactions to Hitler are usually justified solely on the grounds that the German dictator despised the democratic system, persecuted the Jews, and broke the law in his own country. But there are doubts about this. Disregard for democracy, anti-Jewish policies and lawbreaking are also the hallmarks of states and governments with which Roosevelt collaborated without fear of contact. Thus, the deeper reason for Roosevelt's unfriendly policy toward Germany as early as the spring of 1933 obviously lies in a hostility toward the Germans that he has carried within himself since the First World War. Since it cannot be ruled out that Roosevelt would also have acted in 1933 against any other German Reich government that would have dared to attempt to free Germany from the punitive provisions of the Versailles Treaty. Nor did Roosevelt's hatred of Hitler diminish because the German dictator was succeeding in a field of politics 530 where he himself would have liked to have succeeded. Germany's 6.3 million unemployed are mostly back in work in 1936, and Roosevelt, with 12.8 million people out of work in 1933, still sits on 10.4 million unemployed in 1938 despite his New Deal program. Thus Hitler's German path with its "economic miracle" also becomes a popularity problem for Roosevelt at home. The second thread, from World War I to World War II, unwinds from Wilson's many "peace notes." The U.S., which gave the impetus for a negotiated peace with Wilson's 14 points in 1918, and which thereafter insisted and also repeatedly assured with a whole series of further notes that these 14 points should become the basis of an amicable peace, tolerated from the beginning of the armistice that Great Britain, Italy, and France should override and disregard most of these 14 points. The U.S., with its series of notes, has made a guarantee to Germany and Austria-Hungary that there will be a peace according to the terms of the 14 points. The American-German exchange of notes on Wilson's 14 points from January to November 1918 resembles a preliminary peace treaty, which the Americans, as soon as the German, Austrian and Hungarian troops lay down their arms in reliance on the 14 points, fail to keep. At Versailles, the United States withdraws without song or sound from its moral and international legal obligation to honor the guarantee of the agreed terms. They allow a postwar order in Europe that they must know will lead to the next war. In the years that follow, the American nation wraps itself in its isolationism and pretends it bears no responsibility for the wreckage piled up at Versailles. Thus, until 1939, the U.S. governments do not take a single effective step to alleviate or solve the minority problem for the millions of German and Hungarian citizens separated from their mother countries. America does not want to know anything more about its guarantee for the 14 Wilson points. The U.S.A. is much more stiffening to fix the status quo of the German Reich from 1933. Before the armistice in 1918, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had promised in writing that, in the event of a peace treaty, no parts of the country would be divided or assigned to foreign countries against the will of the populations concerned. This is precisely the point around which the German Reich has been negotiating for years, and threatening Hitler since September 1938. Roosevelt does not see now or later that here the United States would have been under obligation. He sees "peace and justice" solely in the preservation of the status quo of national borders in Europe. In his bias against Germany, Roosevelt cannot see that the right of self-determination of the peoples proclaimed by the Americans themselves also belongs to peace and justice. 531 Roosevelt paints Hitler's expansionist drive on the wall even before the dictator has publicly stated his intention to annex Austria and annex Czechoslovakia. The American president continues his "campaign" against Germany even as Hitler successively concludes a treaty of friendship with Poland, guarantees France possession of Alsace-Lorraine, and assures England by treaty that the German fleet will be limited at 35% of the British. Only with Hitler's atrocity against the Czechs is there a reason under international law to wage war against

Germany. But Roosevelt's hands are tied by the U.S. Congress when it comes to the German invasion of the Czechs. So he promises the Poles, British and French that he will actively support them in a war against Germany. In London, he even urges massively to stop the Germans at the next revision request. Roosevelt overlooks the fact that it was the U.S. that first broke its word at Versailles and then gave birth to the Danzig dispute. The American president wants to prevent a Danzig agreement in 1939 or war. His ambassador to England Josef Kennedy, looking back on his time in London, said in December 1945: "Neither the French nor the British would have made the German-Polish question a cause for war if Washington had not kept drilling." 12 Germany's Contribution to the Outbreak of War The first thing that jumps out is that Hitler opens a war on September 1, 1939, because of Danzig. But this is only the occasion which immediately becomes a world war. Without a previous history, England and France would hardly have allowed themselves to be drawn into a new war in favor of Poland because of the Danzig and transit route question alone. The real German contribution lies in two earlier events. These were the annexation of the Sudetenland to the Reich in October 1938 and the occupation of the Czech Republic as the remnant of Czechoslovakia, which disintegrated in March 1939. Both events brought the foreign countries against Germany with varying degrees of vehemence and severity. The annexation of the Sudetenland, as much as it is considered legitimate in Germany, ultimately only comes about because Hitler enforces the annexation with the threat of waging war against Czechoslovakia otherwise. Although the annexation took place in the form of the Munich Agreement with the approval of the British, Italians and French, this was only because neither the Czechs nor the aforementioned powers felt able at the time to prevent a military conquest of the Sudetenland. In Munich, Hitler 12 Tansill, page 597 532 forces the three aforementioned victorious powers for the first time to rescind one of the Versailles coercive measures themselves. In Paris and London, this cannot be forgiven or forgotten thereafter. For this

reason, the British opposition politician Winston Churchill described the Munich Agreement flatly as "German blackmail," despite British approval. The annexation of the Sudeten territories triggered a wave of war preparations and anti-German sentiment in England and France. Since the annexation, and that is months before Hitler threatens the rest of Czechoslovakia, and before he begins to press the Poles for Danzig, the parliaments and the press in London and Paris begin to talk and write about the danger of war in Europe. Hitler is unable to persuade the former victorious powers diplomatically and without such "blackmail" to extinguish the last mortgages of Versailles themselves. Instead, with the annexation of the Sudeten, he ignited a general readiness for war against Germany. Hitler provides the second and resounding cause for the outbreak of war with the occupation of the Czech Republic. In doing so, he violates international law. He breaks the given word and abandons the hitherto legitimate line of his foreign policy of bringing only German people "home to the German Reich". With these three breaches of law, word and policy, Hitler crossed the line of what the Versailles powers were prepared to accept. But London and Paris again felt unable to take military action against Germany. But with the occupation of Prague, the British and the French decide to give Hitler and the German Reich and the German Reich the bill for the misdeed against Czechia as soon as possible. The open items on the bill are called: - punishment for the occupation of Czechia, - restoration of the Versailles balance of power, - cancellation of the British-German naval agreement - British "balance of power" and - French domination of the continent. Even if the last two items are mutually exclusive, it is just that England credits one and France the other. Without the Czech occupation, the governments in Paris and London could hardly have explained to the citizens of France and England why they should have gone to war for Poland because of the German city of Danzig. And without the wartime encouragement from London and Paris, the Warsaw government would have had to search for a peace solution itself. The aggravated situation in August 1939 could only have arisen because Hitler himself had given the reason

for a new war by occupying the Czech Republic six months earlier. The governments of England and France cleverly managed to maneuver Hitler, with the help of Poland, into a predicament in which he could only renounce Danzig and abandon the German minority or wage war with Poland. German complicity in the outbreak of World War II⁵³³ lies first in the occupation of Czechoslovakia and only secondarily in the violent solution of German-Polish problems. If, on the other hand, one looks at the last occasion, the dispute over Danzig, one sees that the factual points of contention at issue are now only of very minor importance. Now that Hitler has assured the Polish government of the retention of the economic privileges hitherto enjoyed in Danzig, and now that the Poles, for their part, have been prepared to relinquish Danzig's representation in foreign affairs, only the customs and postal rights of the Poles in the Free State and an ammunition depot remain to separate the two sides from an agreement. The emotional differences are of much greater importance. The population of Gdansk wants to be allowed to belong to its own country again after about 20 years, and the Polish population regards Gdansk as originally Polish and sees the annexation of Gdansk to the German Reich as a national defeat for Poland. Considering the minor importance of the still open factual points of dispute and the fact that Hitler repeatedly informs the heads of the governments of England and France that he does not want a war with their countries, it is an outrageous event that the Polish government declares the return of Danzig as a reason for war, that Hitler starts this war and that Chamberlain and Daladier turn the war over Danzig into a world war within two days. The occasion of Danzig alone cannot explain why the governments of six nations are deliberately heading for war. But even the German occupation of Czechoslovakia is not enough to fully interpret this outbreak of war. The real reasons lie deeper. Balance The great war fought between 1939 and 1945 has its Central European-German, its Mediterranean-Italian, and its Pacific-Japanese dimensions. In the case of the latter two, it is the former Allies from World War I who are fighting it out. In the case of the Central European-German dimension, it is a repetition or continuation of the First World War, which the Germans had lost first in Flanders and on the Atlantic and then at Versailles. In 1919, all the victors bring home their war profits, some German and Austrian border territories, others German colonies, and the third German industrial patents and reparations. In doing so, the victors fail to transform the end of the war into the beginning of peace. They cement a state of affairs that the defeated Germans and Austrians cannot tolerate in the long run. In Germany, all democratic governments before 1933 ultimately fail because of the direct or indirect consequences of the Versailles burdens and the unwillingness of the victors to grant the Germans a genuine peace.⁵³⁴ Even when, from 1927 onward, the German imperial governments attempted to negotiate their country's ability to protect itself in moderation, and when, in 1931, the Austrian and German governments sought a customs union, they disrupted what, in the view of the victors, was "peace." The two new republics, Germany and Austria, are cradled in 1919 with the "baptismal promises" of Versailles and Saint-Germain that they must remain semi-sovereign states in perpetuity or become disturbers of the peace. Consequently, when the new German Reich government under Hitler began to dismantle the postwar Versailles order piece by piece, it was disrupting what the victorious powers considered to be peace. Even the moderate start of Hitler's government, which makes offers to limit armaments on its own initiative six times, does not change this. The status quo changes proposed by the German side tend to be breaches of the Versailles peace. In addition, it becomes apparent that Hitler's every moderating step is interpreted as weakness. The first example of this is his proposal to end the turmoil before the Saar referendum by foregoing a referendum and concluding a friendly treaty with France that would establish the instant rights of the French in Saar mining as a permanent solution. Hitler's failures at the negotiating table, in marked contrast to the successes he enforces by hand or threat, "educate" the dictator to use the latter methods henceforth. The inability of the Reich to defend itself, constructed at Versailles, with an unprotected Rhineland border against France and with an Reich

army that outnumbers the armies of neighboring countries 1:12 in peacetime strength and about 1:100 in the event of war, is not a state of affairs acceptable to the Germans in the long run, given the incursions of the Poles, French, Belgians and Lithuanians into Reich territory. The rearmament of 51 peacetime divisions plus about the same number of reserve divisions and the rapid buildup of air forces for the time when the army is not yet fully capable of defense seems to most of the citizens of Germany at the time when this is being done to be the order of the day and not an omen of a new war started by Germany. But for the victorious powers, the very announcement of German rearmament is a breach of the "peace" of Versailles and an alarm signal. The rebuilding of the Wehrmacht, which became evident in 1935, was seen as such in Washington, Paris and London. France and the United States failed to accept and treaty the limitations on German self-defense capabilities offered by Hitler in 1933 and 1934 and to pay for them by limiting their own armaments. Instead, neither the French wanted to sacrifice parts of their land and air forces, nor the Americans to curb their enormous naval buildup. Each had "its good reasons." Hitler, after all, agreed by treaty with Great Britain on a 1:3 inferiority of the German navy 535 and remained faithful to the treaty as long as he could count on England not reemerging as an enemy state. During his first years in power, Hitler, as far as external security is concerned, appears to his own people as a "man of peace" as a result of his public speeches. Until September 1938, he does not let the German people see that he is prepared to use the Wehrmacht not only to protect the Reich but also to achieve his goals. In the consciousness of the citizens and soldiers, the Wehrmacht reconstruction serves solely to defend their own country. In 1933, I believe, history is still open-ended. The development, as it leads to the Second World War in 1939, confirms in the end the fears of the victorious powers, who have been accusing the Germans in general since 1919 and Hitler in particular since 1933 of having worked towards a new war and world domination. But in their fear of Hitler and the Germans, the victorious states themselves created the scenarios in which Hitler later resorted to violence instead of approaching the problems with patience and staying power. Hitler also learns from the victorious powers the lesson that patience and staying power alone will not help him. The prohibition of the defense of the Reich in the Treaty of Versailles, the minimal army granted, the unprotected Rhineland border, the attacks of the Poles, French, Lithuanians and Belgians on the territory of the Reich, the secession of German territories against the vote of the population concerned, the taking away of German colonies and foreign possessions in money, mining and oil concessions, encircling Germany with a network of military treaties, and, last but not least, French talk of "aircraft carrier Czechoslovakia" at Germany's back are the items on Hitler's agenda for his workload over the next few years. By occupying Czechoslovakia and imposing a protectorate on it, the dictator committed a crime against the Czechs in moral, human and international law terms. The victorious states, all condemning this, did not intervene here, although they had the right and the possibilities to do so. After their inaction, peace prevails again. If this had not been so, other states would also have had the right to unleash new wars against England or France at any time in order to free third states from the protectorates imposed on them or to start wars to settle old scores. Equal rights for all. Despite this peace obligation

Danzig, the extraterritorial connections to East Prussia and the treatment of the German minority in Poland ignited the Second World War six months later. The population of the Hanseatic city of Danzig, separated from the motherland against its will, wants to be annexed to Germany. The people of East Prussia want to have transportation routes available for trade and travel from their own part of the country to the main area of 536 their own state, on which they will be independent of Polish harassment in the future. And the Germans remaining in West Prussia, Poznan and East Upper Silesia want to live free from tribulation, discrimination and persecution. The Poles, for their part, do not want to sacrifice one meter of ancient Polish territory or any of their rights, and they expect loyalty from their citizens of

German mother tongue. This is the value of the dispute in the spring of 1939. Hitler's subjective view is that he has already gone a long way toward meeting the Poles when he rejected the Polish policy of his 16 predecessor governments in 1934 and since then has made no claims for the return of West Prussia, Posen, and East Upper Silesia. Since December 1938 and his Teschen agreement, he also believes that he can settle the German-Polish problems on the basis of a territorial recognition for West Prussia Posen East Upper Silesia against Danzig and the extraterritorial transport routes. From December 24, 1938, his offer is called "recognition against Danzig plus a peace treaty for 25 years". On January 5, 1939, Hitler brings his offer to a new short form: "Danzig comes to the German community and remains economically with Poland". At this time, on January 26, 1939, and thus even before Hitler commits his fall from grace with the Czech Republic and provides a reason for war, French Foreign Minister Bonnet and Prime Minister Daladier stoke the embers on which war will soon ignite with their speeches in the Paris National Assembly: "In the event of war..... all the forces of Great Britain will be at the disposal of France, and likewise all the forces of France at the disposal of Great Britain." And addressed to Poland: "... that it was necessary to oppose the demands of certain neighbors with a categorical no." Daladier and Bonnet do not want a Danzig solution and no reconciliation between the Germans and the Poles. Both obviously want war with Germany again. Hitler just as obviously wants Danzig and if that goes no war for it with Poland; war only if Poland leaves no other avenues open. This is how the first "Führer instruction" of November 24, 1938, concerning Danzig is to be understood, in which Hitler has the hand-strike-like occupation of the city prepared from neighboring East Prussia. The route from East Prussia avoids the need for German troops to enter Polish territory and the necessity of a war with Poland for the sake of the Anschluss. With the German invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia, Germany has provided a reason for war in the eyes of the British, French, Americans and Soviets. Since they all do not use the reason for war to intervene militarily to save the Czechs, the peace obligation binds them again afterwards. Instead, the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and France plant a new difficulty for Germany on the field of German-Polish differences they sowed at Versailles. They animate the Poles, who are susceptible to it, not to get involved in any German wishes, and thus prevent the solution of problems which they themselves created 20 years earlier. This must all but automatically ignite a new war in the now heated tension between Poland and the German Reich. Roosevelt promises Chamberlain and Daladier help against Germany and encourages them not to shy away from another war. Chamberlain's offer of assistance deprives the Poles of the last incentive to respond to Germany's wishes. Finally, he gambled away Hitler's last reserves of time with his feigned mediation. Daladier and Gamelin lure the Poles onto a "path of victory" with the promise of a major French attack against Germany's western front, which ends in disaster for the Poles. Stalin stokes the readiness for war on all sides. And Roosevelt, hearing of Soviet "interests" in eastern Poland, leaves the Poles unwarned lest they end up sacrificing Danzig and thereby prevent a war. Poland is not a protégé for all of them, but only the means that will certainly make the next war possible. But Poland is not only the victim in this. The agonies that the Poles inflict on "their" Germans, White Russians and Ukrainians weigh more heavily in the summer of 1939 than the Danzig corridor problem. To sum up, it can be said that the actors mentioned here each in their own way helped to instigate the Second World War. Complicit in this new war are the governments and states that created the grounds for the next war at Versailles and Saint-Germain, and later deliberately prevented the grounds from being eliminated when the danger arose. So much for what Asher ben Nathan meant when he said, "What matters is what preceded the first shots." Hitler unleashes the shots of the German Wehrmacht against the Polish army in the early morning of September 1, 1939, sweeping the world into a maelstrom that continues to reverberate to this day. 538